

TODAY

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Offer of compensation or job back as warpath across Europe ends at Frankfurt HQ



8.30, KENSINGTON: Ms Horlick heads for the office. 9.45, FINSBURY CIRCUS: A brief unscheduled meeting with Martyn Drain, head of personnel at Morgan Grenfell. 2.30, FRANKFURT: Ms Horlick calls the bank HQ

City bank superwoman wins the day

NICOLA HORLICK, the City "superwoman" suspended by her employer Morgan Grenfell, yesterday staged a dramatic showdown at the bank's headquarters in Frankfurt in an effort to win back her job.

Ms Horlick, 35, who angrily denied allegations that she had tried to poach staff for a rival company, spent more than an hour in discussions with Deutsche Bank, Morgan Grenfell's parent.

She emerged victorious, claiming that a lawyer and the head of the Human Resources Department had listened to her story and discussed two possible options: reinstatement or compensation. Ms Horlick said that the company had agreed to a full investigation.

She said: "I was very happy with what they have said. I was extremely pleased that they were prepared to listen to my side." Earlier she had accused Morgan Grenfell of acting like judge and jury.

She added: "These were very reasonable people. I feel they wanted to see a fair outcome. I am very grateful to them for doing that and I am a lot happier than I was this morning. It has restored my faith in human nature."

It was the culmination of an extraordinary day in which she had led a procession of journalists around her former office in London publicly demanding to be reinstated.

A posse of Fleet Street reporters, photographers and TV camera crew then escorted her to Frankfurt but the confrontation erupted into farce when she failed to emerge from the offices to brief journalists. A security guard told the waiting pack that she had slipped out of a back door and gone to the airport. She was later tracked down to a coffee bar at Terminal 2 where she said that she and the bank had agreed a form of words.

However she said she was "very unhappy" with a statement issued by Morgan Grenfell in London which said that the Deutsche Bank had seen her only out of courtesy.

Ms Horlick, a mother of five, had claimed that she had been brutally treated by a "machievellian" regime. She also believed that senior figures had felt she devoted too much time to her children, one of whom has leukaemia.

This extraordinary day began when Ms Horlick decided during a sleepless night that she would have to take drastic action to save her reputation. On Tuesday she had been suspended from her new job as managing director of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management.

She got up early to feed her seven-month old baby Antonia and prepare for a showdown with chief executive Robert Smith, at the Finsbury Circus offices in London where she has worked since 1991.

At 8.15, she appeared at the door of her £1.3 million mansion in Kensington holding Antonia and declared that she had decided she was going to fight a David and Goliath battle.

"I am going to feed my baby, get changed and then I am going to Morgan Grenfell," she told reporters. "And you are coming with me."

She said that her husband Tim, who works for Salomon Brothers, had left for work an hour before and knew nothing of her plan. "He would have talked me out of it".

Fifteen minutes later, dressed in a black business suit, she left home and climbed into her red Alfa Romeo saying that the company had a fight on its hands. At Finsbury Circus where she arrived at 9.30, security men were clearly not expecting her.

She swept through the front door and made for the staircase — "not the lift, they will be able to block them off" — to go to her third floor office. There were gasps of astonishment as she led reporters and photographers in a style which one member of staff likened to the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

The staff at Morgan Grenfell could scarcely believe what they were seeing. Like a miniature tornado she stormed through their offices trailing a procession of journalists.

Rows of suited City workers looked up aghast from their screens, as, head held high, their former boss brushed aside frantic security guards on her way to the chief executive's office.

"Lay a finger on me and I will call the police," she told security. "Lay a finger on them," she added, pointing to the press, "and I will still call the police. Some of her former colleagues shouted encouragement. "Well done Nicola."

Continued on page 2, col 5

Millennium plan rescued by deal

The Millennium Exhibition has been saved after an agreement was struck between the Government, the Labour Party and the Millennium Commission.

The deal came after another day of talks between Michael Heseltine and Tony Blair, who devised a formula which the commission is expected to approve today. Page 2

Gingrich faces \$100,000 penalty

Newt Gingrich is to be ordered to pay a penalty of at least \$100,000 (£60,000) after the special counsel investigating ethics charges against the House Speaker released a highly condemnatory report. However, the fine is not likely to prompt Mr Gingrich to resign. Page 17

The Times on the Internet
http://www.the-times.co.uk



First British war crimes trial ends before it begins

BY BILL FROST

BRITAIN'S first Nazi war crimes trial collapsed before it began yesterday, costing the taxpayer £4 million and casting doubt over any future prosecutions.

An Old Bailey jury decided that Symon Serafinowicz, an 80-year-old retired carpenter from Banstead in Surrey, was unfit to stand trial after hearing evidence that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. He had faced three specimen charges of murdering unknown Jews in his native Belarus between November 1941 and March 1942 while the country was under the Nazis.

The verdict adds to the cost of unmasking alleged war criminals living in this country, currently standing at £15 million and with five suspects still under investigation.

As he left the Old Bailey, Mr Serafinowicz's son Kazimierz said: "Justice has been done. They brought out all the big guns against my father — the Solicitor-General was called in to prosecute. But in the end the jury saw how crazy it was. He did not kill Jews and anyone who says he did is either potty or a liar."

Helping his frail father to a waiting car, he added: "All we want to do now is go home to Banstead and be left alone. This has made him even more ill than he was before — a cruel farce."

Nicholas Bowers, the family solicitor, said that the jury had made the right decision. But Mr Serafinowicz regretted that he would not now have the opportunity to clear his name.

The prosecution had said that the murder counts were specimen charges, designed to reflect a much greater scale of involvement in the murder of as many as 3,000 Jews in the Mir area of Belarus.

During an eight-day hearing the court heard from doctors who agreed that Serafinowicz was suffering from dementia, probably the progressive and incurable Alzheimer's disease, to such an extent that he was unfit to be tried.

After the jury unanimously found he was "under a disability" and therefore unfit to stand trial, Sir Derek Spencer, QC, the Solicitor-General, said the prosecution had given "careful consideration to the options available". Counsel had decided to invite the Attorney-General to offer a nolle prosequi — an unwillingness to prosecute in the case — and he had accepted.

Mr Serafinowicz sat with his head bowed and showed no emotion as the jury decided. Continued on page 3, col 1



Balloon may be grounded by Gaddafi

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

THE AMERICAN hot air balloonist Steve Fossett may be forced to abandon his attempt to fly around the world after Libya refused him permission to overfly.

Mr Fossett's new route over Niger, Chad and Egypt will use so much propane fuel that he will almost certainly have to put down his craft, *Solo Spirit*, in India.

The cable to Mr Fossett's Chicago mission control from Colonel Gaddafi's authorities in Tripoli read: "We regret to advise cannot issue permission for your balloon."

Richard Branson, whose own attempt to fly round the world in a balloon ended in failure earlier this month, said he understood decision was due to the Muslim festival of Ramadan.

Farewell, old fruit, we're sad to see you go

BY JOHN HOPKINS

HAIL! old friend. You have been bruised, squashed, twisted, peeled, pushed and pummeled. You have brought succour to millions of rugby players who have gnawed at you ravenously, sucked you, spat you out, thrown you to the ground and even trodden you into the sodden turf.

We are sad to say, old fruit, your days are numbered. We hope you will take this on the peel. You are about to be kicked into touch.

In case we do not get another chance, we'll say: "Farewell, orange, and thanks." You may have been a humble Jaffa to the local greengrocer, but to us you were the cat's pyjamas.

Watch this afternoon's international matches and after 40 minutes the referee will blow his whistle for half-time. For five minutes the players will gather round their captains and coaches until the referee blows again and another 40 minutes of play commences. Such is the very order of things, like the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon.

Now, though, comes news from Dublin, where the lawmakers have been meeting, that when a new season starts in the southern hemisphere in March, the five-minute interval is to be doubled and players may leave the pitch. No more will they be seen to be putting a chunk of orange into their mouths and sucking it dry before picking at their teeth to remove its last shards and taking a slug, slug, slug of restorative drink. From March, in games at the highest level at least, all this and more will take place behind closed doors.

How sad. Another essential part of the fabric of the game is changed. Perhaps, then, this is the moment to raise a point. When did the orange assume this enormous role? Were there oranges at Twickenham when it was known as Billy Williams's cabbage patch? And what about at Cardiff Arms Park? Perhaps one of those tribal anthems sung so lustily in Cardiff was as much a paean to oranges as it was to the men in red shirts, who always seemed to win, in those days at any rate.

And why, whether it was in Invercargill or Inverness, was it always oranges that were brought out at half-time, never satsumas, mandarins or tangerines, kiwi fruit or avocado pears?

So farewell old round one, you did us proud; and farewell, too, to half-time. What will they think of next? Changing the shape of the ball perhaps.

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BALLOT 97

Late deal saves Millennium Exhibition

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH AND ANDREW PIERCE

THE Millennium Exhibition was saved after weeks of uncertainty when an agreement was struck late last night between the Government, the Labour Party and the Millennium Commission.

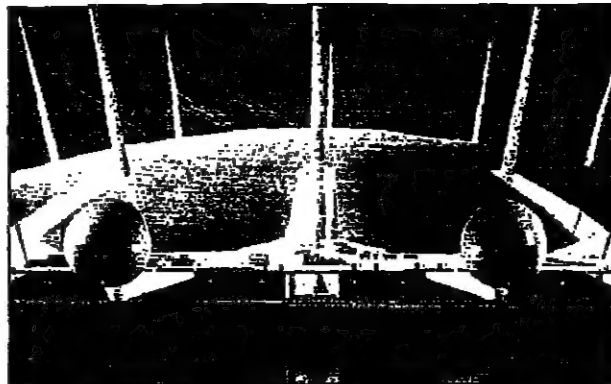
The deal came after another 24 hours of negotiations between Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Tony Blair. They came up with an agreed formula which the Millennium Commission is expected to approve today.

A spokesman for Mr Heseltine, who has invested much of his personal authority in the project, confirmed that the massive project was back on schedule. "We are delighted that the exhibition is going ahead," he said. "I think you will find all three sides have got what they

wanted." However, as uncertainty continued over whether the troubled project could be saved, Labour and the Tories blamed each other for the hold-up. A spokesman for Mr Blair said: "Discussions are continuing. Mr Blair and Mr Heseltine are confident that an announcement will be made tomorrow."

However, even as negotiations continued over Labour's insistence on being able to review the project if it wins the election, a further setback emerged. The designers of the proposed dome, the centrepiece of the £800 million exhibition, admitted that they had no idea how much it would cost.

Imagination, a design company, disclosed that it had come up with 34 designs for



One of the designs for the Millennium Dome, which will be twice the size of Wembley Stadium

the dome, which will be twice the size of Wembley Stadium, to match an equal number of different budgets. The latest price tag was £580 million.

Pam Williams of Imagination said: "We don't know what the final figure will be. It

is not a question for us. It is an issue for the Millennium people who are still talking about it."

As the Millennium Commission studied the form of words agreed by Labour and the Government on the future

of the project, a spokeswoman said that the Commission had to be satisfied that the project could be delivered under the terms sought by both sides.

Officials from the Government, the Labour Party and the Commission spent the day continuing to thrash out the arguments. The Commission has said that the project is in danger of collapse unless agreement is reached immediately because time is running out for work contracts to be signed.

Tony Blair has been told that the scheme would be "dead in the water" without his support. Financial backers would be scared off for fear that a Labour government would scrap the celebrations if they were not deemed financially viable.

Mr Heseltine, engaged in a delicate balancing act with

Labour over the project, was careful not to criticise the Opposition. John Major, anxious to ensure the Government is not blamed if the deal collapses, was not so restrained. He said on BBC local radio yesterday: "The Labour Party has had its representative on the discussions and debate over this project right from the outset. It's very surprising at the last moment that they have failed to understand what is going on and created this difficulty."

Jack Cunningham, the Shadow Heritage Secretary, said that agreement could have been reached on Wednesday if the Government had accepted Labour's demands. He denied that Labour had ever threatened to cancel the project, but said it wanted to make sure there was no massive funding gap.

Horlick hires City spin doctors to handle her offensive

Bank embarks on campaign to calm pensions clients

By ROBERT MILLER, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

EXECUTIVES at Morgan Grenfell embarked on a charm offensive yesterday to reassure anxious City and pension fund clients in the wake of the Horlick suspension and subsequent resignation.

Many Morgan Grenfell investors are pension fund trustees, who have a legal and moral duty to safeguard billions of pounds on behalf of millions of pensioners.

Mrs Horlick and her 30-strong team looked after £18 billion of UK pensions fund business out of total assets managed by the firm of £70 billion.

During the past five years Mrs Horlick and her former boss Keith Percy, who left the City investment house in the wake of the Peter Young affair, have produced above average returns for their clients. According to the latest index published by WM, the performance monitoring agency, Morgan Grenfell's funds out-

performed all its pension fund rivals last year by 2.5 per cent.

One of the larger clients is the Railways Pension Trust Company, which has £1.25 billion invested with the firm, and looks after the interests of 330,000 members. David Adams, the chief executive of the railways pension company said yesterday: "In view of the recent events we shall of course be keeping an extra close eye on what is happening."

"We shall be watching to see whether the previous good performance can be maintained and whether staff remain at their posts. We also want to know if there will be any changes to the way in which the portfolio is managed."

Other Morgan Grenfell clients expressed concern at the seemingly endless catalogue of high profile disasters that have befallen the City investment house in the past six months. One cited the Peter

Young case in which the former manager of two European funds allegedly breached City rules on the way in which the funds were managed leaving Morgan Grenfell's parent company, Deutsche Bank, nursing a potential compensation and costs bill of some £400 million. Mr Young, who was dismissed last September for "gross misconduct" is the subject of a Serious Fraud Office investigation.

In another, separate, incident fund manager was suspended and subsequently dismissed for breaking Morgan Grenfell rules on dealing in shares on his own account. Other high profile pension funds clients of Morgan Grenfell include a number of local authorities such as Westminster City Council and Merton in south London.

Robert Smith, chief executive of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management, said yesterday that the firm stood by its actions in suspending Mrs



Security staff eject photographers who followed Mrs Horlick to Morgan Grenfell's City offices

Horlick from her post on Tuesday. He said: "We are completely satisfied that we have acted properly throughout."

Meanwhile, Mrs Horlick has hired Anthony Cardew, fast-becoming the Max Clifford of financial public relations. He was little time in turning a rapidly deteriorating situation to his client's advantage.

A strategically placed interview in the *Financial Times* was all it took to put Mrs Horlick back in control. Rival newspapers had little option

but to follow her words, reinforcing that first tactical strike with a succession of damaging volleys. Morgan Grenfell was in turn obliged to "leak" details of an internal memo to staff, in its desire to recapture the upper ground. Other clients with whom he works include Eurotunnel and British Aerospace.

Mr Horlick, the former Deutsche Morgan Grenfell Asset Management Executive, as reported yesterday. Her solicitors are Herbert Smith.

Orthodox Jews fear split over Reformist memorial

By RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

THE Chief Rabbi is facing increasing divisions within the Jewish community over his decision to attend a memorial meeting for the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn.

Conservatives in the Orthodox community are calling for Dr Jonathan Sacks to pull out of the meeting of the Board of Deputies of British Jews because Rabbi Gryn, although a nationally respected and well-loved figure, as well as a survivor of the Holocaust, was a member of the progressive Reform movement.

While Dr Sacks has no jurisdiction over progressive Jewry, some Orthodox Jews fear his presence at the meeting will give authority to the Reform movement. Dr Sacks is attending in his capacity as a president of the Council of Christians and Jews, an organisation to which Rabbi Gryn was deeply committed.

Other speakers at the meeting next month will include the Right Rev Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford and chairman of the council, and Rabbi Tony Bayfield, chief executive of the Reform Movement and Reform Synagogues of Great Britain.

The Chief Rabbi has been criticised by Dayan Yisroel Lichtenstein, head of the Federation of Synagogues Beth Din, a conservative body, who said there was "widespread dismay" at his decision to honour the Reform Jewish leader. "There is a lot of dismay in the Orthodox community that by attending, the Chief Rabbi is giving a certain amount of respect to Hugo Gryn's position as a rabbi."

The protest has angered liberal Jews. Neil Tenkoff, editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, said: "Surely Rabbi Sacks, as one Jew to another, a friend remembering a friend, can and should openly pay tribute to Rabbi Gryn. He was a remarkable figure of inspiration, a man who somehow survived Auschwitz, both in body and spirit."

Dr Sacks said yesterday: "There were profound religious differences between us but it has been my principle... that we work together regardless of religious differences on all matters affecting our common humanity and certainly in commemorating the Holocaust. It was on that basis that we worked together in life and it is on that basis that I pay tribute to him after his death. As Jew, as a human being, I can do no less."

Leading article, page 23

Superwoman wins the day

Continued from page 1
good for you", they said as she made for the boss's door.

But Mr Smith was not there. After a quick conversation with the personnel manager, Martyn Drain, she led her entourage around the corner to the bank's HQ to confront the chairman, Michael Dobson.

From the foyer in Bishops-gate, she ran upstairs to say she would wait precisely 20 minutes. "After that I am going straight to Frankfurt."

Within 15 minutes, it was clear that there was to be no meeting and so, at 10.30, she headed back to Kensington to pick up her passport.

At 12.30 Ms Horlick was checking in at Heathrow and the 1 o'clock Lufthansa flight was surrounded by representatives from most national newspapers and ITN. In business class, she sipped sparkling water and told the 20 journalists that the charges against her were "completely trumped up".

"I am probably completely mad for doing this, but I have come this far and I have got to see it through," she said.

At Frankfurt German journalists were told: "I am here because I have been constructively dismissed and I want to be reinstated."

Then taxi to the Deutsche Bank HQ and Ms Horlick walked into the glass-fronted building surrounded now by at least 30 journalists. Her arrival was not unexpected. Heinz Schaefer, head of security, shook her hand, saying: "Ms Horlick, would you like to come up to a meeting room?"

He agreed that a German-speaking representative from Reuters could go with her to the fifth floor room.

Earlier, Ms Horlick said that Morgan Grenfell had paid no heed to the five and a half years "devoted service" she had given. She said management were well aware that for the past eight years her eldest child, Georgina, had been fighting acute leukaemia. Recently Georgina had suffered a relapse and was undergoing chemotherapy at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

"All my spare time goes on caring for children," she said. "I am simply not in a position where I could be thinking about starting all over again in a new job and to be



Bank's German headquarters agreed to an inquiry

poaching staff for it. I need to feel secure. "I have a daughter who is sick. I have a huge mortgage and I owe a lot of money in tax due to a bonus I received last year. I need to be around the team that I love and trust. All I want is my job back."

She said that the family had suffered "real trauma" over Georgina's illness. During her recent relapse the child also fell victim to the so-called flesh eating virus necrotising fasciitis. Although she was now recovering she needed constant care and Ms Horlick's team at Morgan Grenfell had frequently stepped in to cover for her when she had to dash to the hospital at short notice.

Ms Horlick, an Oxford graduate, laughed off suggestions that she was a superwoman managing to hold down a £1 million job and bring up five children. She said that her last baby, Antonia seven months, had been conceived in a desperate effort to find a matching bone marrow donor for Georgina.

"It has been very, very hard for me but I have given everything to this job. I spent all night worrying about whether I should speak out or not but all I have is my professional reputation so I have to defend it. The company wanted me gagged but now I have gone for constructive dismissal I am free to say what I want."

Ms Horlick added that she would not be able to work with her two immediate seniors Robert Smith and Michael Dobson: "It would be a case of me or them."

Ms Horlick said she was flabbergasted when on Tuesday she was told about the allegations against her. She said: "I was pulled out of a business meeting and told I was suspended. I was taken to my desk, told to clear it and then escorted out. At that point they didn't even tell me what the allegations were. I discovered that later from a letter."

Ms Horlick said she later

found out that that same information had been on the work screens for most of the day. She said the company was obsessed with public relations and had called Brunswick PR even before consulting lawyers.

She added: "I come from the old fashioned school which believes that people in the same company work together. It used to be a completely unpolitical environment where people thought they were there for life, but now it's all backstabbing."

"I think one of the things they couldn't take about me is that I am very straight and I won't stab people in the back. What I say is what I mean and my team know they can trust me."

"If this company had sat down and thought about me as a human being with the life I have and not the person in the bloody promotion picture they put out of me, they would realise my family have had a hard time."

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'Resourceful' accused joined forces with Germans, escaped death at Dachau and later fought for Allies

Nazis' police chief 'took part in mass murders'

REPORTS BY BILL FRIDG

A PASSIONATE hatred of Soviet Russia drove Szymon Serafinowicz into the arms of the Germans when they invaded his native Belarus in 1941. He was one of the first to join a police unit set up by his country's new masters. He was to change sides before the war ended, enlisting with the Allies after falling into their hands while fighting in France.

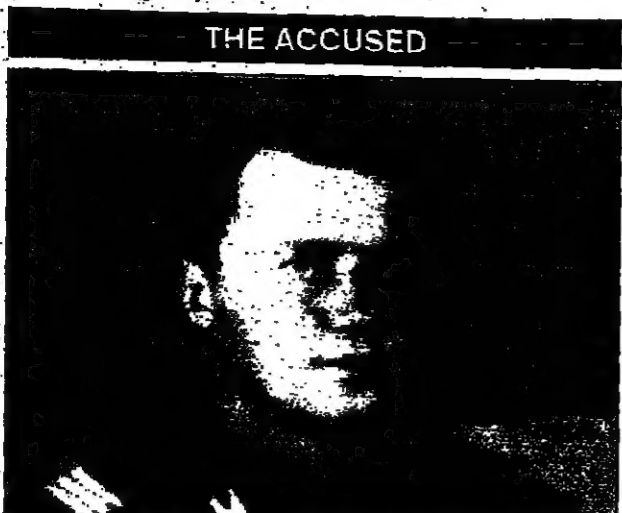
In 1944 Mr Serafinowicz, "a tough and resourceful man" escaped death in Dachau. He had been arrested when his loyalty to the Nazis was questioned. Only the intervention of a German officer who remembered his past service saved him.

He came to this country at the end of the war. His credentials for citizenship appeared in order: he had served with the Allies in Italy and Egypt, but had not seen active service.

According to the Crown, Mr Serafinowicz, now 86, had served his Nazi masters with diligence and loyalty and was soon promoted to command a unit not far from Mir, the largest town in the area where he lived. In the early winter of 1941 he was promoted to district commander, gaining responsibility for the entire region.

According to John Nutting, QC, prosecuting counsel at committal proceedings in Dorking, Surrey, Mr Serafinowicz's battalion was responsible for carrying out "Jewish Actions" - the liquidation of everyone in the ghettos around Mir.

When the Germans marched into the Mir region more than 3,000 Jews lived there.



Serafinowicz served both the Nazis and the Allies

Just over a year later none was left alive.

"The Crown case is that, on the occasions when three of these Jewish actions took place, Mr Serafinowicz was present as a senior policeman and participated in the killings," Mr Nutting said. "This is not a case in which identity is in issue. Mr Serafinowicz acknowledged to the Metropolitan Police in interviews in 1993 that he is the man about whom the witnesses speak. But he denied to police that he had played any part in the killing of Jews."

A Jewish survivor remembered seeing Mr Serafinowicz and some other policemen on horseback chasing Jews one Sunday afternoon in the winter of 1941. "About 20 to 25 Jews were running as fast as they could and one or two minutes later I saw Serafinowicz on a horse... and with him were two or three policemen. I could not hear what

they were saying but they were shouting into the air and chasing the Jews. Some of the Jews fell down and the police rode over them with horses and trampled them."

According to the Crown, the measure of Mr Serafinowicz's authority in the military hierarchy was revealed in the town of Turets, where massacres took place in the autumn and early winter of 1941. Ten Jewish youths were summoned to the police station to dig graves on the evening of October 19. They were ordered to make one large enough for four people.

As they were preparing the site Mr Serafinowicz stood near by. They moved to a window of the police station. Mr Nutting said: "Serafinowicz and a German began firing through the window. Screams from the victims could be heard."

On November 3, 1941, the Jews of Turets were instructed to parade the next day in the

main square. A roll call at which Mr Serafinowicz was present was conducted by local policemen. About 100 Jews were chosen for forced labour while a further 600 people were taken to the cemetery and shot with machine guns. "As the senior Belarus policeman present, Mr Serafinowicz must be regarded as the principal participant in the massacre of the Turets Jews which took place that day," Mr Nutting said.

On November 9, 1941, another massacre was to take place in Mir itself. German troops arrived in force accompanied by units of the local police. The "full horror" of what transpired was recalled by Lev Abramovsky, who was 16 at the time. "As the Germans arrived in Mir early that morning I was woken by my mother and told to run away. We and other Jews ran in the direction of the Jewish cemetery. My brother and I hid in a loft from where we saw our mother, father, brother, sister and brother-in-law shot by the police, who then smashed my two young nephews' heads against the gravestones."

Mr Abramovsky and his brother were discovered in their hiding place and herded into a column of Jews being marched to a sandpit. At the pit, police and German troops used heavy machineguns to murder men, women and children in batches of 20 to 50.

Mr Abramovsky watched his surviving brother being lined up at the edge of the pit and then shot. When his own turn came, he fell forward into the pit a split second before the bullets hit his companions and scrambled out after nightfall.

Letters, page 23



Szymon Serafinowicz, 86, outside the Old Bailey yesterday, where his trial for war crimes collapsed

Why ministers were reluctant to take action

IN the summer of 1986 a list of 17 names was handed to Margaret Thatcher by a Nazi war crimes investigator working for the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. The men named were British citizens leading unremarkable lives.

Mrs Thatcher, who as prime minister had recently returned from a trip to Israel, was furious and demanded action. However, successive Home Secretaries were to remain lukewarm until a detailed report had been prepared. The evidence was so appalling that not even the most cynical politician could fail to be moved.

Nevertheless, legislation paving the way for what was to have been Britain's first war crimes trial aroused much political opposition when it was introduced six years ago. Sir Edward Heath spoke of show trials: "Lots of people will rejoice in it and that will be very damaging to this country."

A number of senior Tories joined in, fearing for justice when both accused and accusers were well into the autumn of their years. Ivor Stanbrook, at the time Tory MP for Orpington, said it would be impossible "to do justice to those few people on the basis of allegations made against them in respect of things done many thousands of miles away 50 years ago."

However, the Government pressed ahead, stung by reports that Britain had unwittingly provided a safe haven for as many as 100 war criminals. When the War Crimes Bill was passed, David Waddington, the Home Secretary at the time, said: "Certain

people, who may have been guilty of the most bestial crimes, still live in Britain. I don't think we can forget about it."

A war crimes inquiry conducted by Sir Thomas Hetherington, a former Director of Public Prosecutions, and William Chalmers, a former Crown Agent for Scotland, had by mid-1990 identified three individuals. Among them was Serafinowicz. A Scotland Yard unit was set up to gather evidence against them and investigate 75 other suspects.

Keenly aware that time was of the essence, the Government made provision that

THE POLITICIANS

committal proceedings could be waived. However, as critics pointed out at the time, no sensible lawyer would allow his client to be rushed. Thus committal proceedings in the case of Serafinowicz, which began this time last year, were to run over three months.

The case drifted. A trial which should have begun once the lower court decided there was a case to answer was put off for months.

At the same time there were repeated rumours that the Scotland Yard unit that was to be wound up the investigations were too costly while both suspects and witnesses were getting older or dying.

As one bitter insider said: "I doubt there will ever be a full trial now of anyone in this country suspected of Nazi war crimes. Perhaps the critics were right: it was all too long ago and too far away."

Brave Jew lived with enemy to warn victims

MORE than 50 years had elapsed since the last meeting between Mr Serafinowicz and a Jew who had lived under his roof masquerading as a Christian to avoid execution.

Oswald Rufeisen, who later converted to Catholicism and took holy orders at a monastery in Haifa, Israel, also joined his landlord's police unit and became a staff officer while secretly working to undermine their murderous work.

Facing Mr Serafinowicz across the court room, he told an extraordinary tale of courage and determination. Mr Rufeisen, now 74, told how he listened as his landlord ordered the murder and torture of civilians.

Mr Rufeisen fled to Belarussia from Poland to escape persecution by the Nazis and arrived in the town of Turets in early November 1941 with a letter of reference from a veterinary surgeon to a relative in the town.

His talent for languages was recognised by the Germans soon after his arrival. While appearing to be loyal and enthusiastic, he was in fact sending warning messages to ghettos and villages in the region earmarked for "Jewish Action".

Mr Rufeisen remembered Mr Serafinowicz as "a tall handsome man with the innate intelligence of the detective. He had an education... he was completely loyal to the Germans."

"He gave orders directly to the policemen in the field and did not delegate authority to others under his command. He acted as intelligence officer both for his own benefit and on behalf of the Germans and would gather information from local policemen, especially through the commanders of other police stations in the

THE ACCUSER



Oswald Rufeisen, 74, saw torture and murder

region. He also had his own informants in the surrounding villages."

Asked by investigators if Mr Serafinowicz had killed people as well as ordering his men to do so, the monk said: "In most cases he participated personally. No doubt."

However, his landlord had apparently turned a deaf ear when suspicions were voiced that Mr Rufeisen might be Jewish. "Mr Serafinowicz explained and justified my position to his wife Jadwiga and to others. But I do not consider that he protected me," he said in evidence.

Asked to describe the position of Jews in the community before the German invasion, Mr Rufeisen remembered that there was "a kind of interdependence". He said the local population had not been anti-semitic.

Mr Rufeisen was compelled to witness executions at close quarters. Mr Serafinowicz

had not been present when Wehrmacht troops had sought revenge in a village after the killing of a comrade, but Mr Rufeisen had gone as a translator.

"I called the elders of the village. I said 'Sorry but there's such anger that somebody must die.'"

He said he had advised the elders to find two people, working in the fields, that the village would like to get rid of. Minutes later two men were brought forward.

One was a forester, who had denounced a Pole to the Germans. The second was a 17-year-old mentally-handicapped boy.

"They were ordered to lie on their faces, then the commander said this was not enough to calm the fury of the soldiers. He called a man of about 22 or 23 from the group of men. He was ordered also to lie down, but suddenly he rose and began to run."

"He was hit after 40 to 50 metres and some of the soldiers ran after him and killed him with their bayonets where he was lying. Then the commander gave the order to kill the two."

Reflecting on his time in Mir, he said: "Neither I, nor Serafinowicz were, I believe professional murderers. On that day it was necessary for some people to die, in order to save many more. I acted according to my conscience."

Asked if Mr Serafinowicz could, had he wanted, have stopped the killings between November 1941 and August 1942, Mr Rufeisen said: "No, he could not."

Interviewed before his committal, Serafinowicz was bitter at what he called his betrayal at the hands of a man he had fed and sheltered. "He was a Jew and I didn't know. I could have been shot."

Trial folds before it starts

Continued from page 1
he should not face trial. The defence had always maintained that Serafinowicz was innocent of the charges, which were brought under the 1991 War Crimes Act.

William Clegg, QC, his counsel, said there was evidence that Serafinowicz had saved many from execution who might otherwise have faced a firing squad for collaborating with partisans.

He told jurors, who considered their verdict for 3½ hours, that they must decide whether Serafinowicz was "the best actor this country has produced in recent times" or "a sick and dying old man". The Crown insisted that Serafinowicz would be able to cope with a trial.

The verdict is an embarrass-

ment for Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney-General, who has to authorise war crimes prosecutions. It is also a major setback for the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mike Whize, of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said: "The British Jewish community has every confidence in the fairness of our criminal justice system and we hope that it may trial others suspected of involvement."

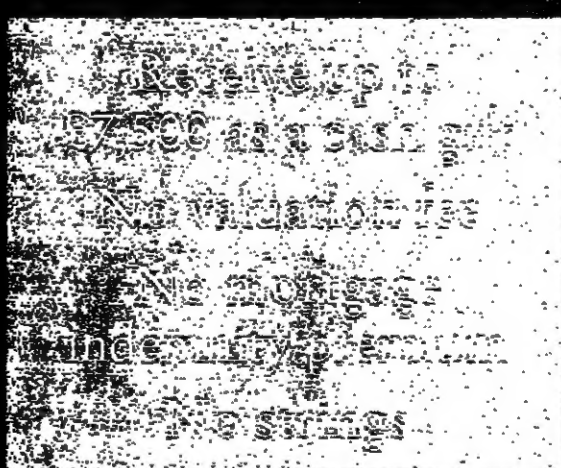
The decision to pursue alleged war criminals in this country came when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. In face of opposition from many senior politicians, she took a personal interest in the legislation.

Lord Tebbit, the former Conservative minister, said

last night: "Today's events have only confirmed me in my belief that this whole affair has been a waste of the time of Parliament, the police and the judiciary and a colossal waste of public money which would have been better spent on caring for the people who suffered as a result of the Second World War."

Alex Carlile, the Liberal Democrat legal affairs spokesman, who lost relatives to the Nazis in Poland, said: "Those of us who fought for the War Crimes Act always recognised that it was fairly unlikely that there would be many prosecutions, let alone convictions. But we believed, and continue to believe, that it's morally and legally right for there to be a War Crimes Act for the trial of suitable persons," he said.

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Police hunting for missing Zoe Evans arrest her parents

By STEWART TENDLER

THE mother and stepfather of Zoe Evans were arrested yesterday as police continued to search for traces of the missing nine-year-old.

Last night Wiltshire police would only confirm they were holding a local man and woman. The arrests came after police visited their home in army married quarters in Warminster barracks.

Zoe disappeared last Saturday. Her parents saw her on Friday night when she was checked sleeping in bed. But she was seen the following morning by a schoolboy neighbour at a park.

The arrests were announced yesterday by Detective Superintendent Colin Dixon, head of Wiltshire CID. A planned press conference was suddenly cancelled in the morning because the case had reached "a crucial stage". Police had been intending to launch a fresh national appeal for help to find the child.

Mr Dixon said later that a



Zoe Evans: missing

couple were being held but added that a body had not been found and police still wanted help from people who may have seen the girl, who is of Asian appearance.

Earlier this week Paula Evans, 28, made a television appeal at a press conference which was cut short when she was overcome with emotion and ran sobbing from the room. Her husband, Private Miles Evans, 22, a driver for the Royal Logistics Corps,

continued the appeal. Zoe will be 10 on January 27 and her parents said that a puppy dog would be waiting for her at home as an early present.

Flanked by Mr Dixon and another officer, Mr Evans appealed to his stepdaughter: "Zoe, we want you to come home. We all love you. You are just going to get lots of cuddles and hugs."

On Wednesday police found bloodstained clothing during searches of the Warminster area. One item was a girl's, another a male's. Police are awaiting forensic analysis of the blood.

Police were also trying to find a blond youth who was seen with the girl at the supermarket on Saturday afternoon. He was also believed to have followed her along a footpath to fields.

When Zoe was last seen, she was wearing a dark top and a black skirt. She had no coat and only £2 in cash. The Evanses married last August. Zoe's natural father lives in Malaysia.



Out of key: an apology by Brian Harvey, second right, failed to placate his colleagues

Ecstasy outburst is swansong for East 17 singer

By EMMA WILKINS

THE lead singer of the pop group East 17 has been sacked by his colleagues because of his praise for the drug Ecstasy. The three other members of the band, who said they did not take illegal substances, decided to act the day after Brian Harvey, 22, spoke out in a radio interview.

Harvey apologised shortly after the interview, but Tony Mortimer, Terry Coldwell and John Hendy said that his "unacceptable behaviour" had driven them to drop him.

A statement from their management company said: "The remaining three members of East 17 under no circumstances can condone the taking of Ecstasy or any other illegal substances. They want it known that these remarks made by Brian Harvey do not reflect their views."

In an interview with LBC in London on Thursday morning, Harvey said Ecstasy was a safe drug which made users "better people". He said that it "increases love" and boasted that he had once taken 12 Ecstasy pills in one night. His

comments attracted an angry response from the Prime Minister and Paul Bettis, whose 18-year-old daughter Leah died after taking Ecstasy. They also led to the group's records being banned by 14 television and radio stations. A pre-recorded interview has been dropped from the children's programme *Scruffy and Co* on Carlton Television today.

Harvey's apology later on Thursday, in which he said his comments had been stupid and irresponsible, failed to placate his colleagues. All four members appeared last night on *Top of the Pops* on BBC1 singing their new single *Hey Child*, but their performance had been pre-recorded earlier in the week.

East 17 have sold more than one million records in the past three months. Their latest album, *Around The World - The Journey So Far*, has sold more than 600,000 copies since its release ten weeks ago. The single *If You Ever*, with Gabrielle, has sold 400,000 copies since its release 12 weeks ago.

PC Coulton is charged over arms discovery

By DANIEL MCGRODY

THE Royal Protection Officer whose wife was murdered in the grounds of the nursing home where she worked was last night charged with firearms offences over weapons found at his home. PC Michael Coulton will appear before magistrates in Woking, Surrey, today.

He is charged with possession of a prohibited weapon, shortening a shotgun and possession of a firearm with intent to cause another to believe unlawful violence would be used against them. The charges are unrelated to his wife's death. PC Coulton, 52, was arrested after allegedly pointing a shotgun at two detectives who visited his home in Woking. His wife Patricia worked at the Lynwood nursing home, Sunninghill, near Ascot.

CORRECTION

Phillip Crawley, managing director of The Times Supplements Limited, has been appointed managing director of the New Zealand Herald, not managing editor, as incorrectly reported yesterday.

Bullimore says race is too dangerous

By DANIEL MCGRODY

THE single-handed race that almost cost Tony Bullimore his life, and similar round-the-world competitions, are becoming too dangerous, the yachtsman admitted yesterday. He believes future events need "taming".

Mr Bullimore, 58, who spent four days trapped in the upturned hull of his yacht in the Southern Ocean, said competitors were sailing too far south and that yacht designs were risking competitors' lives.

He spoke as the Chilean air force said it may have made contact with Gerry Rouse, a Canadian sailor who has been missing for ten days in the same race that has already seen Mr Bullimore and two others rescued. A search has been launched in the Cape Horn area.

Mr Bullimore voiced his reservations about such races in a BBC television interview last night. He said: "I think the organisers of the race have got to look deeply at the rules and regulations and may have to tame the race a bit, not allow the yachts to go so far south." He again pledged to try again "if I can get the right boat together".

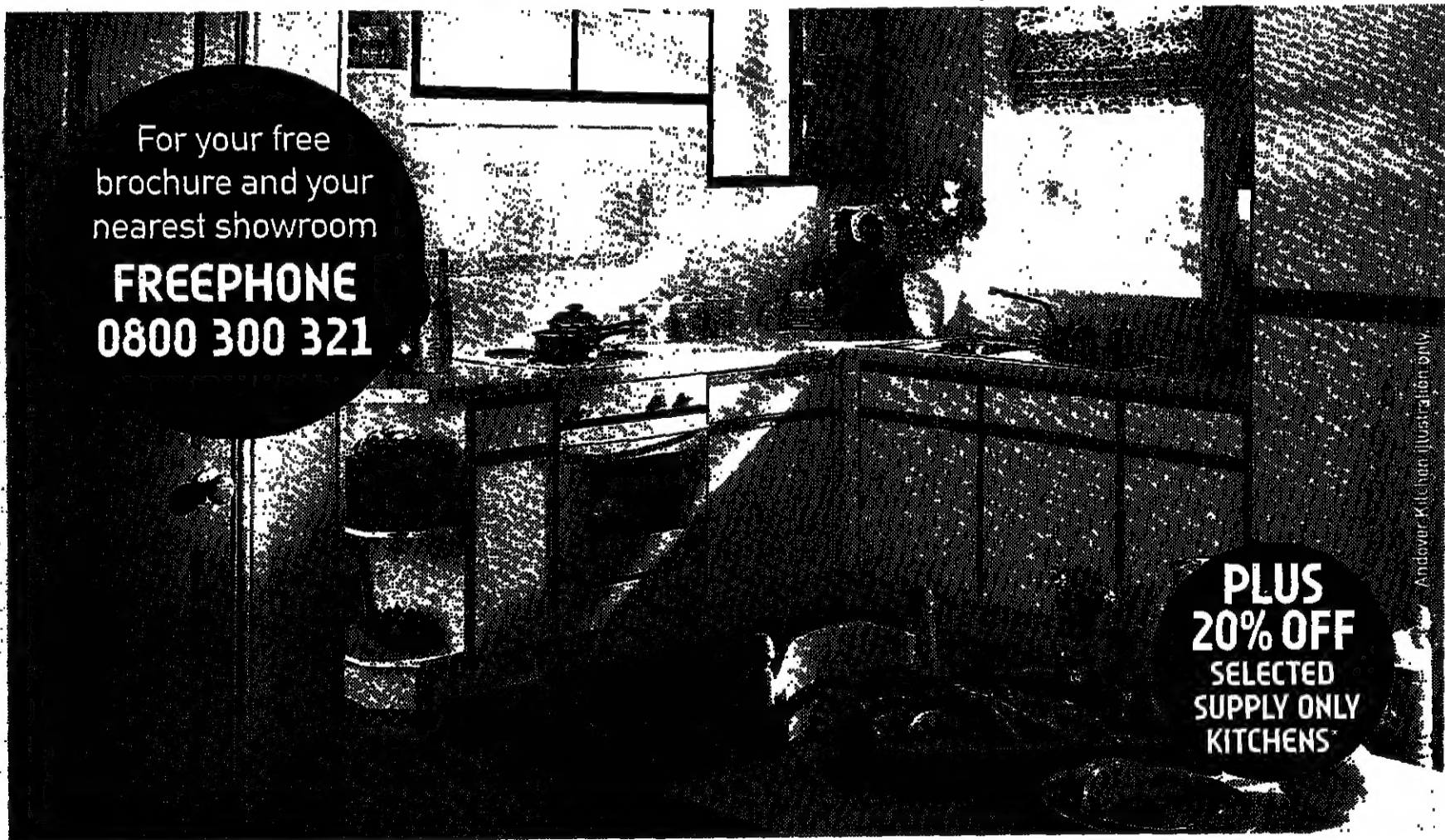
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No 13

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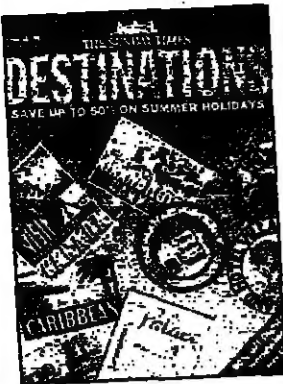
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Bludgeoned wife's lover collapses in family murder trial

By PAUL WILKINSON

THE lover of Eve Howells, the woman whose husband and sons are charged with her murder, collapsed in court yesterday as he was about to tell of their 12-year affair.

Russell Hirst slumped forward in the witness box on the second day of the trial of Mrs Howells' husband, David, and their teenage sons, Glenn and John. Mr Hirst, 38, had told the jury at Leeds Crown Court that he had known the family for 20 years since he started as an apprentice fitter working for Mr Howells at a chemical plant in Huddersfield, west Yorkshire.

He had become a close family friend and gone on holiday with them, he said. But, as Franz Muller, for the prosecution, questioned him about his involvement with the Howellses, he asked for a glass of water before falling forward on to his arms. A court usher cradled his head as a first-aid was called.

Then the burly, 6ft Mr Hirst was laid out, apparently unconscious, alongside the public gallery.

The court was cleared and, after ten minutes, Mr Hirst walked with assistance to the restaurant. When the trial resumed 20 minutes later, Mr Justice Allott, the trial judge, told the jury that Mr Hirst had gone to Leeds General Infirmary for checks. The judge said: "I have been told it was nothing worse than a faint. I was following his statement and the poor chap was just one line away from admitting his adultery, so perhaps it was not surprising."

Later the judge said that, on doctor's advice, Mr Hirst would not give evidence until Monday. The trial has already heard that Mr Howells, 47, had told detectives he was unaware of the affair, but had told a cellmate while on remand that he discovered the relationship two months before his 48-year-old wife's death on the night of August 31, 1995. She died under a hail of blows to the head from a stonemason's hammer as she sat in the living room at their bungalow in Huddersfield.

Mr Howells, a maintenance fitter, and his sons, who were 15 and 14 at the time, have denied murder. Glenn Howells, now 17, has admitted manslaughter because of provocation by his mother, who he claims mentally and emotionally abused him for five years. Initially the boys said that she had been killed by an intruder while they walked their dog and Mr Howells played darts.

The prosecution claims that Mr Howells and his sons plotted to kill Mrs Howells, a history and religious instruction teacher at Newsome High School in Huddersfield, because of her domineering and tyrannical ways. While the boys carried out the killing, Mr Howells set up an alibi at the darts match, it was alleged.

Yesterday Jamesena Stewart, Mrs Howells' aunt, said that, shortly after the killing, she had visited the family at the hotel where they were staying. She said: "David told me he and Russell Hirst had gone to sleep on the bed crying."

Mr Howells had just been to

identify his wife in the mortuary. She said: "He said, 'She was lovely, she was beautiful, beautiful,' but the look in his eyes ... my spine chilled. I have never experienced anything like it before."

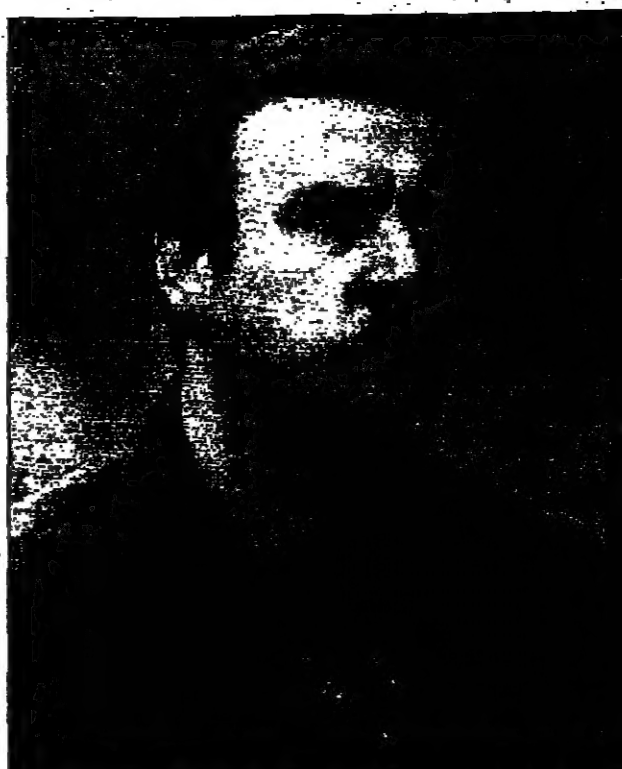
Earlier, John Chadwick, Mrs Howells' head of department, had said he was unaware of her nickname at school of "Evil" Howells. He said she was often sharp with

pupils and tended to deal with them "head-on".

"She had a formal style and high expectations. She expected work to be done and, if it was not, she would challenge them about it. She had very little tact, she did not understand the effect she could have on the children. They were often upset at the way she spoke to them."

Anthony Rolan, a school

friend of Glenn Howells, said under cross-examinations that the brothers were expected to do their own washing and ironing and clean their bedroom. Mrs Howells would subject it to a military-style inspection. He agreed that they could be banned from going out for at least a week for such offences as leaving an apple core in their room. The hearing continues.



Russell Hirst arrives at court yesterday before collapsing as he was about to tell of his affair with Mrs Howells

Small Latin and less Greek for pupils of future

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

LATIN and Greek will dwindle further in comprehensive school sixth forms as a result of new limits next year on A-level syllabuses. Classics teachers said yesterday.

Sir Ron Dearing, in one of his last acts before retiring as chairman of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, asked the four A-level examining boards in England to reduce the number of syllabuses to two each in the major subjects. Less popular subjects such as Latin would be allowed only one syllabus per board.

Classicsists claimed that the move would threaten popular syllabuses with a high level of coursework, which are considered essential for pupils from outside the grammar and independent schools. Teachers in other minority subjects said they faced the same danger.

The lower limit would apply to subjects with fewer than 15,000 candidates. Even at GCSE, Latin attracted fewer than 12,000 entries last year. Barbara Bell, executive secretary of the Joint Association of Classical Teachers, said: "It is already difficult to keep Classics on the timetable in state schools because they

cannot afford the small classes. This will be one more obstacle, especially if it influences GCSE syllabuses."

Coursework is limited to 20 per cent at A level, but independent schools, which provide the majority of candidates in Classics, opt mainly for wholly examined syllabuses.

Peter Jones, a founder of Friends of the Classics and lecturer in the subject at Newcastle University, said: "With so much variation in pupils' experience of Latin and Greek below the sixth form, that element of coursework can make all the difference."

A spokeswoman for the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority said a reduction in the number of syllabuses would make it easier to guarantee standards. The authority felt that one syllabus per board was adequate for subjects with a small entry, but would not act unreasonably if there was evidence that a subject might be damaged.

Nick Tate, the chief executive, appealed to state schools last year not to abandon classical studies. He said Latin and Greek were part of the "cement which holds together the consciousness of nation".

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Celebration of children's festival affirms our quest for knowledge

THE religious quest is the search for knowledge in a world which grows more complex every day. Sacred texts guide us, but we need instruction from other sources as well. The ancients found inspiration in nature, which they peopled with many gods; even trees had dryads which could inspire humans. The Garden of Eden contained the Tree of Knowledge as well as the Tree of Life.

Next week, Jews celebrate Tu B'Shvat — the New Year of the Trees. Most religions

have some kind of observance where ancient traditions emerge to remind us that we are part of nature and often depend on the bounties of the earth for sustenance. This festival, which bids us to eat the fruit of many trees, fits that pattern.

The fifteenth day of the month of Sh'vat, at the end of the rainy season, was the time of determining the tithes for all the fruit of trees which blossom before Tu B'Shvat. It was a minor harvest feast, which developed in two ways: as a feast for the

mystics, with a special prayerbook possibly compiled by Nathan of Gaza, the "prophet" of the pseudo messiah Shabbatai Zevi; and as a happy folk observance.

In earlier days, Sephardic communities, in Baghdad, for example, made it a family occasion. Little sacks embroidered with their children's names and filled with sugared almonds and hazelnuts were hung around their necks. In well-to-do homes, one tried to collect 50 different kinds of fruit for a banquet where each guest

read a paragraph from a special text and was given a fruit for which he said the appropriate blessing. Even now, a night of study may take place where texts from the Bible, the Talmud and the mystic Zohar book are studied.

Why this emphasis on study? Perhaps, here, we

come to that other pillar of Jewish life which belongs to all our religious observances: study as part of worship and as part of our home life. "The Torah," says our liturgy, "is the Tree of Life." Somehow, we are transported back to the Garden of Eden, to the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life that grow in its

centre. As the Bible and our own experience inform us, everlasting life is beyond us; we cannot be like gods. But we can sit around the Tree of Knowledge and know good from evil, and we come to recognise that its fruits will always sustain us. Celebrating a "New Year of the Trees" may then contain a special insight into the human condition.

Tu B'Shvat is no longer a mystic feast celebrated by scholars. It has become even more a children's festival, and there is the recognition

that the quest for knowledge begins with the child and is a joyous affirmation of a tradition of learning which commences at the very beginning. The children of Jerusalem have a school holiday, go into the fields and plant trees, and share this feast with Jewish children throughout the world.

The Diaspora has also created happy rituals which convey that knowledge is not only acquired in books but in the woods and gardens. We cannot return to the Garden of Eden, to Paradise and the

actual Tree of Knowledge. But, on this festival, the thoughts may come to us that Eve was right in forcing Adam to eat that fatal apple. We cannot live without the quest for knowledge. Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden, their kindergarten, so that their children could grow, develop, and eat the fruit of knowledge.

Albert Friedlander is Dean of Leo Baeck College and Rabbi of Westminster Synagogue

Defender of the faith

A FORMER professional footballer who swapped his boots for the Bible is to return as a vicar to the town where he played. The Rev Peter Hart, former captain of Walsall FC, will take charge of St Martin's Church.

Mr Hart, who is married with two daughters, made 472 appearances as a defender for the club. He began a theology course in 1990 and later served as a curate in Derbyshire.

Mr Hart, 39, takes up his new post in May. He hopes to return to the Second Division club's Bescot Stadium — on the terraces, rather than the pitch.

"It's very exciting to be coming back," he said. "I've got lots of happy memories from my time with Walsall. I gave up football gladly when I got my new vocation, but the game's always popping up when I tell my life story and of how I became a Christian."



Samuel Johnson, whose low opinion of women preachers still pervades more than 200 years later

Women preachers suffer as men turn a deaf ear

By RUTH GLEDHILL
RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

MALE worshippers' dislike of being told what to do by a female is making life difficult for women preachers, according to a report published this month.

Research into the problems faced by women preachers has revealed that many are faced with ambivalence or even hostility from men in the congregation. Men are uncomfortable with women in authority "because of the instinctive feelings of innuendo dependency they engender", the research suggests.

The report, published in the 1997 fellowship paper of the College of Preachers, comes nearly three years after the first women were ordained to

the priesthood in the Church of England, although women were preaching from Anglican and Methodist pulpits for decades before that. But, prompting the question of how much, if anything, has changed, it comes more than two centuries after Samuel Johnson said: "A woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

Of the entries so far to this year's Times/College of Preachers' Preacher of the Year award, about one fifth are women. In the previous two years, at least one woman has made the final five or six. The report, by Canon Peter Kerr, of the Church of Ireland, is based on the results of

surveys of episcopal congregations in America. The research, by Professor Lee McGhee of Yale Divinity School, is based on surveys carried out in 1979 and 1994, and examines how congregations listen to and perceive women's preaching.

Canon Kerr said: "There would seem to be definite differences in the way people listen to men and women in the pulpit, though these are less marked in the later survey, perhaps because congregations are more used to women preachers."

But he says there were differences. "The content of women's preaching was described as personal and innovative whereas men preached scholarly, informative and knowledgeable ser-

mons." Professor McGhee found that men were considered more forceful, persuasive and loud in their delivery, while women were clear, sincere and evoked emotion.

Canon Kerr wrote: "For the past 2,000 years it is the male voice that has dominated, not just in preaching, but in liturgy and theology. In other words, congregations are just not used to women preachers."

The closing date for entries to The Times/College of Preachers' Preacher of the Year award is March 31. The final will be held in November in Durham Cathedral. For the first time, entrants may submit tapes of their sermons.

At Your Service
Weekend, page 13

Dying man is granted Ireland's first divorce

By AUDREY MAGEE

THE first divorce in the history of the Irish Republic was granted yesterday to a terminally ill man who wants to marry again before he dies.

The case in the High Court in Dublin ends Ireland's centuries-old ban. It was the last country in the European Union to introduce divorce.

The man, who cannot be named, is aged 68 and is believed to have a brain tumour. He wanted to divorce his first wife in the hope of settling all financial and legal matters with his long-term partner before his death. He has three adult children with his wife and a daughter with his lover.

But he feared he would be dead before legislation permitting divorce came into effect. Although the Irish voted in November 1995 to allow divorce, the Family Law (Divorce) 1996 Act does not take effect until February 27.

The man claimed his constitutional rights were being infringed by the Irish Government's failure to introduce the legislation in time for him to divorce and remarry. Judge Henry Barron agreed and granted the divorce, which was not contested.

The man, his wife and lover live close to one another in south Dublin. They are on friendly terms. The man and his former wife are professionals who run their practice in a building owned by the wife.

"Divorce had once been commonplace in Ireland under Brehon law. But the arrival from Rome of St Patrick and Palladius, the first bishop to Ireland, in the 5th century, led to Brehon laws being replaced by Christian ones."

Yesterday's decision was welcomed by divorce groups. An estimated 80,000 people are separated in Ireland and many are awaiting divorce.

The Catholic Church said it accepted divorce was now inevitable. "The Church accepts that decision and we will work with the law."

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THE TIMES

Preacher of the Year

Organised by the College of Preachers

Preachers are invited to put themselves forward for The Times/College of Preachers' Preacher of the Year Award 1997. The winner will be presented with a specially commissioned sculpture for display in his or her church and will have their sermon published in The Times. Runners-up will also receive an award to mark their achievement. Entrants can submit notes or complete sermons, but no more than 2,000 words in total please. Tapes will also be accepted. Congregations or a member of a congregation may also nominate a preacher, but only if their permission is obtained first.

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Eric Hebborn continues to haunt art world with posthumous publication of the secrets of his trade

Top forger's DIY guide to creating Old Masters

BY DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

A YEAR after he was murdered, Eric Hebborn, the master forger who duped the art world in the 1960s with more than 1,000 Old Master drawings, is having the last laugh. His guide to how to fake a work of art is to be published posthumously.

Everything an aspiring faker needs to know is there and, as Hebborn admitted, reads in parts like a cookery book: recipes for inks to use, breadcrumbs to simulate the "rubbed look so often found on old drawings", and olive oil for causing some "interesting stains". He also gives tips on how to forge signatures.

Hebborn (1934-96), who faked works by Augustus John, Renoir, Corot and dozens of other masters that fooled collectors and curators worldwide, died in mysterious circumstances at his home in Rome. The city's coroner believes he was murdered.

It is thought someone was trying to prevent him making further revelations about who

was duped. However, his enemies were unable to stop *The Art Forger's Handbook* being published. It comes out next month to coincide with an exhibition in London of his forged drawings by Rembrandt, Boucher and Watteau.

Hebborn, who was sent to hospital aged 8 for setting fire to his school, turned to crime when the art establishment rejected his work. He had won every prize at the Royal Academy School and seemed destined for a glittering career. Posing as a dealer from his home in Italy, he could explain the large number of Old Masters that had come his way. He deceived the art world for nearly 20 years.

In fact, he still does: no one is quite sure where all his works are. Examples entered eminent collections such as the British Museum and the National Gallery in Washington. To add to the confusion, Hebborn admitted that some of the tales described in his 1991 autobiography, *Drawn to Trouble*, were untrue.

What emerges from Hebborn's handbook is a profound knowledge of the Old Masters. He says an understanding of fakes sharpens the eye in looking at the real thing. On the choice of subject matter, he advised: "The general rule is that the less important the name of the artist, the more attractive must be the subject-matter. Children are very saleable, as are views of Venice."

The Art Forger's Handbook is published by Cassell on February 4. The exhibition is at Archway Fine Art, New Bond Street, from February 4 to 28.



Spot the difference: Eric Hebborn's copy, top left, of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Painter and the Connoisseur*. Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo's *Nessus Seizing Deianira*, bottom left, inspired Hebborn's adaptation, right

TIPS FROM A MASTER FAKER

- Use coffee, tea and chicory to tint papers.
- Rub breadcrumbs on chalk drawings to achieve a "rubbed look" found on old works.
- Create some "interesting stains" with olive oil.
- Collect a stock of period paper from salerooms, print and booksellers.
- For charcoal drawing, pack a tin can with willow twigs and slim boughs and put it into the "middle of a very big bonfire". Invite your friends round for a party. When they have gone home, retrieve the tin from the ashes and you have your charcoal.
- Repair worm-holes in paper so that the inside edges of the holes are not

covered with tell-tale ink. The simplest way is to chew it. Lay the sheet on a marble slab and taking a well-chewed, perfectly soft piece of pulped paper — larger than the hole to be mended — place it over the hole. Cover with blotting paper and, with a wooden mallet, weld in the pulp. As time passes, the felt will harden. When the work is finished, it can be removed.

□ Works in pastel are extremely fragile unless fixed. Skimmed milk can be used.

□ The pens of the Old Masters were the quill and reed pen. These produce qualities difficult to emulate with any other kind of pen. A look at Rembrandt drawings is particularly in-

structive on this point. The quill was made from the pinon feathers of birds. First find an amenable bird. To cut a quill one requires a very sharp penknife or scalpel and a small cutting-board or slab.

□ Half a potato rubbed over a grease-stain on paper will normally permit one to draw over the area with ink which would not otherwise take on it.

□ Use period frames, especially if they have labels and inscriptions on the back to suggest a suitable provenance. But do your homework: there may, for instance, be a lot number chalked on the back that an auction house could look up in an old sale catalogue.

Case of faked Rodins leaves France with red-tinted face

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

A DEALER accused of flooding the art market with thousands of fake bronzes purporting to be the work of Rodin went on trial in France this week.

Guy Hain is appearing in Lure, western France, in what police say is one of the most important forgery cases since the war. It has caused deep embarrassment in France, where the suspect bronzes went unnoticed for years and passed through the hands of highly reputable dealers.

M Hain, nicknamed "the Duke of Burgundy" after the name of his former Paris shop, has been charged with counterfeiting works of art by manufacturing replicas of famous sculptures by Rodin and other artists and then selling them as originals. According to prosecutors, the scheme netted 100 million francs (£13 million).

Over a five-year investigation, police confiscated more than 3,000 pieces of sculpture which are now being held under seal in Lure. The statutory, weighing 20 tonnes, includes replicas of Rodin's sculpture of Balzac, *The Burghers of Calais*, *The Kiss* and his best-known work, *The Thinker*. There are also copies of other sculptures by Renoir, Maillou, Carpeaux and Barye.

The works are of different sizes, ranging from vast finished bronzes to incomplete plaster casts. None, according to police, can be classified as a genuine work of art by the artists. Some were made using Rodin's own plaster mouldings, but were manufactured more than 70 years after his death. Many of the latter-day copies are virtually indistinguishable from authentic Rodin bronzes. According to prosecutors, instead of labelling them as reproductions,

M Hain and his former wife, Solange Jonckheere, sold them on as original Rodins.

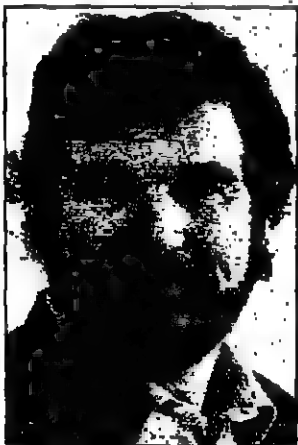
Investigators say that fabricating each new bronze cost M Hain about £2,500. When sold as originals at the height of the art boom in the late 1980s, some of the alleged fakes fetched between £350,000 and £600,000 each. Several are believed to have been sold to wealthy private collectors in Japan.

The forgeries might have passed undetected but for the dogged sleuthing of Denis Vincenot, a Dijon policeman known as the "Maigret of Bronzes". Inspector Vincenot began looking into M Hain's activities in 1991, and he is the key witness in the trial.

If convicted, M Hain faces up to five years in prison. Two Paris auctioneers, Francis Faure and Bernard Rey, who allegedly sold "hundreds" of the sculptures, have been accused of complicity, along with Bernard Rudier, a descendant of the bronze-maker employed by Rodin.

Tracking such forgeries is notoriously difficult, since laws limiting the number of original editions of any sculpture were passed in France only in 1981. Most of the copied bronzes were allegedly cast in a foundry near Lure belonging to Mme Jonckheere.

Some were made by making new plaster casts from original bronzes, but investigators say others were created using original plaster mouldings obtained from the Rudier foundry. M Hain is accused of altering the stamp on the finished bronzes to read "Alexis Rudier", the name of Rodin's founder. Only a few of the bronzes seized by police carried the stamp "reproduction", as required under French law.



Hebborn: forged more than 1,000 Old Masters

No Pension No Life Is this how life is going to be?

From our Business Editor

IT'S a recurring nightmare. It won't go away. Every week is the same.

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Financial

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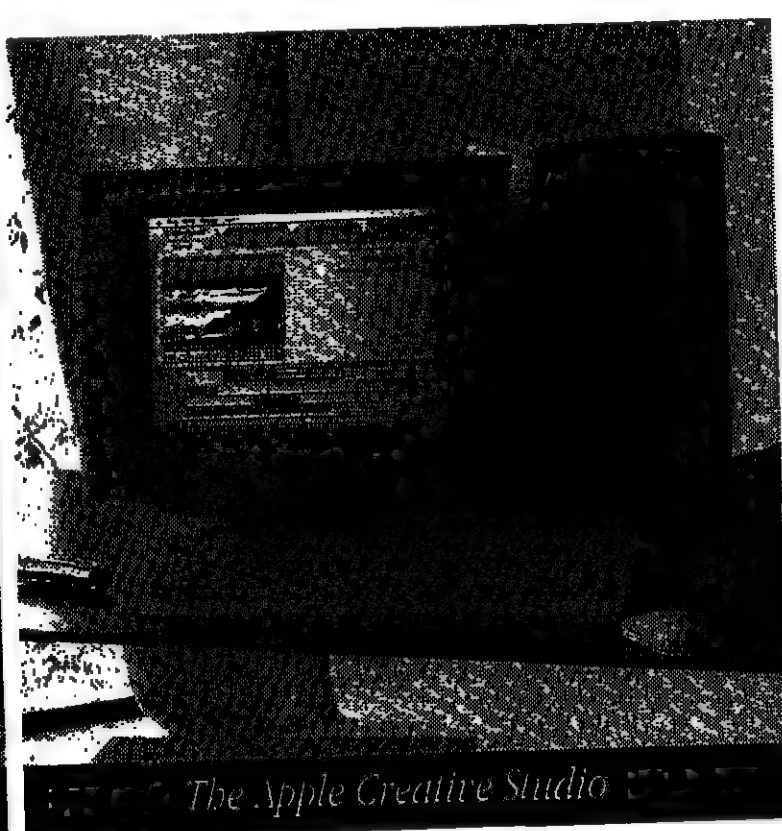
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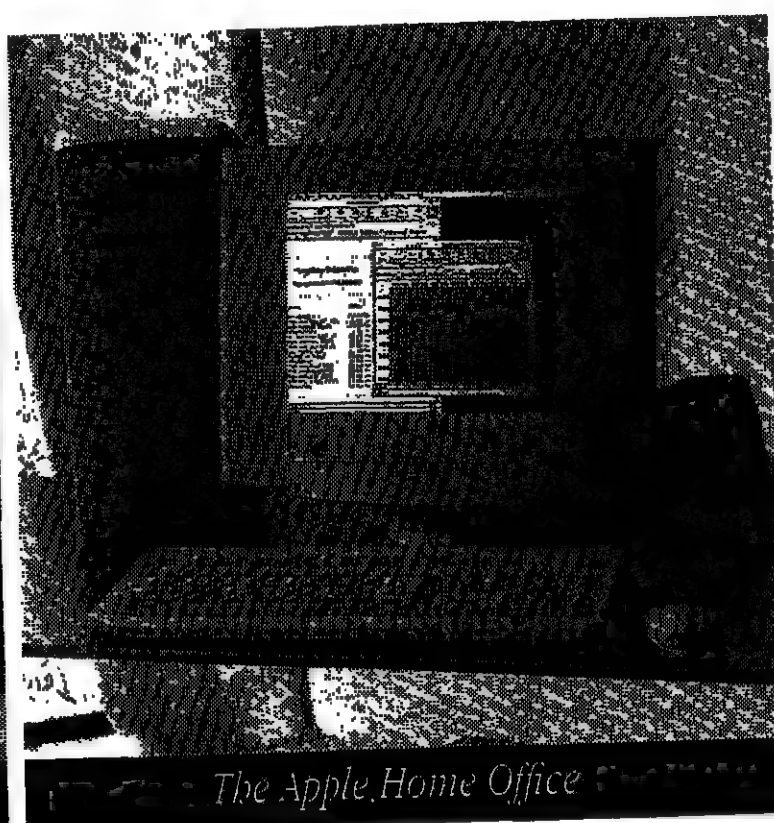
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Council ruffles feathers in battle of Trafalgar Square

By MICHAEL HORNSBY

AN ATTEMPT to evict Trafalgar Square's pigeons by starving them into submission was set in train yesterday by Westminster City Council, which says that the birds are damaging buildings and spreading disease.

However, the pampered fowl have been defended by the London Tourist Board and the Department of National Heritage, which is responsible for the square. They argue that pigeons are as much part of the scenery as Nelson's Column.

The council's environment sub-committee has voted to ask the Heritage Department to rescind the licence of the square's one authorised birdseed seller. The council also wants the square to be included in a general ban on pigeon feeding throughout the borough. It is to ask the Home Office for permission to pass a bylaw to that effect.

Jonathan Lord, the chairman of the sub-committee, said: "We know the birds are popular with visitors, but we receive a steady stream of complaints from residents. At



Trafalgar Square's sole licensed birdseed vendor may have his permit rescinded by the council

least 10 per cent of the birds carry diseases such as salmonella and tuberculosis. Their acidic droppings damage buildings and statues. More than a ton is removed every year from Nelson's Column alone. We would like a bylaw banning the feeding of pigeons in public spaces which would be enforced with fines of, say, £40 to £50 for a first offence. The aim would be to reduce the birds' numbers, not to get rid of them.

"The main target would be the persistent offenders, the little old ladies who are out

every day with bags of breadcrumbs, which they often dump still half-full, creating a food supply for rats."

Louise Wood, of the tourist board, said visitors to London would be hugely disappointed if bird feeding were stopped. She said: "Trafalgar Square must be one of the most photographed sites in the world and tourists come expecting to feed the pigeons."

The Heritage Department said it had no plans to revoke the licence of the seed vendor, which has two more years to run before it comes up for

review. "Trafalgar Square is a landmark site, a major tourist attraction, and the pigeons are part of it," a spokeswoman said. "It is better to encourage people to feed the birds with seed than with bits of hamburger and sandwiches." The department spends £100,000 a year hoisting down the square.

Bernard Rayner, the current holder of the seed vendor's licence, did not look like a man whose job was under threat yesterday. "My family have been selling seeds here for 50 years. The pigeons are part of our heritage," he said. Mr Rayner, who charges 25p for a teacup-sized pot of birdseed, was coy about how much he made each year, but said it afforded a comfortable living.

After posing for a photograph with a pigeon on his head, Scott Means, a computer specialist from Florida on holiday in London with his wife and daughter, said: "It is all part of the appeal of the place. I would be very upset if I could not feed the birds." But Bernd Schmidt, a hygiene-conscious German student, said he could do without the birds. "Very dirty," he said, wrinkling his nose.



The pigeons' backers include the London Tourist Board, which says visitors expect to feed the birds

NEWS IN BRIEF

Barking fine for couple with six dogs

A couple whose six barking dogs annoyed neighbours for 18 months were ordered to pay fines and costs of £3,790 by magistrates at Wigan, Greater Manchester. Six residents living near David Mann and Kelly Lomas in Leigh contacted the local council complaining that the noise of the border collies made it impossible to read, watch television or sleep. The couple have since moved away.

Girl raped on way to school

A 15-year-old girl was raped at knifepoint inside a derelict garage after stopping for a cigarette on her way to school. She had walked a few yards off the footpath leading to her school in Framlingham, Suffolk, when she was confronted by a man wearing a balaclava. He ran off towards the town centre after the attack and the girl then managed to alert teachers.

Prison for charity swindler

A woman who stole thousands of pounds from the national cot death charity she launched was jailed for 11 months yesterday by Liverpool Crown Court. Susan Howe, 43, of Formby, Merseyside, denied 19 charges of stealing a total of £36,872 from the Cot Death Society, but was found guilty of 15 of them at her trial last month. She launched the charity in 1991 after a friend's child died.

Spector waits for decision

Judgment was reserved yesterday in a High Court action over the rights to the pop song *To Know Him is to Love Him*. The 1950s hit was written by Phil Spector, 57, who is fighting the British-based Bourne Music Ltd for return of the rights. He is also claiming hundreds of thousands of pounds in royalties. Mr Justice Ferris did not say when he would give his ruling.

BBC man changes channel

The leading BBC foreign correspondent, Tim Sebastian, is leaving to become diplomatic editor of Channel 5 News. Mr Sebastian, who has worked in Moscow, Washington and Eastern Europe for the corporation and currently presents *Newsdesk*, the BBC World channel's morning news show, will start his new job next month.

Eurostar smuggler in court

A French law student, who was paid £600 to smuggle two kilograms of heroin, worth £165,000, through the Channel Tunnel, was sent to a young offender institution for five years. Southwark Crown Court was told that Virginia Gaze, 19, from Beauvais, Paris, was caught by a routine customs check last October. She pleaded guilty.

Watchman jailed over fire

A security guard who caused a £1.5 million fire at a warehouse in Stockton-on-Tees was jailed for 27 months by Teesside Crown Court. Philip Green, 28, of Middlesbrough, used his cigarette lighter to look around after his torch failed. He fell and started fires in two places. He admitted reckless arson.

Gilbey wins libel damages

James Gilbey, left, a friend of Diana, Princess of Wales, accepted undisclosed libel damages over an article in the *Independent on Sunday* last August which gave the false impression that he had been trying to sell his story to the media. Newspaper Publishing and Peter Wilby, former Editor, said that they had confused Mr Gilbey with someone else.

Deaths rise in cold spell

The cold weather led to a big increase in the number of deaths registered in England and Wales. Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed there were 19,553 deaths during the week ending January 10, nearly 6,000 above the average for this time of year. A week earlier the figure was 18,616.

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	Birmingham	Majorca	2 May	7	28059	SUN HOTEL PLAYA	4T / HB	£320	£60	£260	£234
	Cardiff	Tenerife	19 May	7	28389	CALIFORNIA	3S / SC	£272	£38	£232	£200
	East Midlands	Lanzarote	28 May	14	28442	DON PICO	3S / SC	£349	£60	£289	£261
	Gatwick	Costa Blanca	15 Jul	7	28301	WUDOR	3T / HB	£349	£60	£289	£261
	Gatwick	Ibiza	30 Aug	14	28138	RIALTO	3T / SC	£351	£60	£291	£262
	Gatwick	Ibiza	12 May	7	28140	SUN SEAVIEW COUNTRY CLUB	4T / HB	£329	£60	£269	£243
	Gatwick	Minorca	10 May	14	28211	VISTA BLANES	3S / SC	£260	£60	£200	£180
	Gatwick	Turkey	9 Jul	14	29304	DUYGULU	3T / HB	£349	£60	£289	£261
	Luton	Algarve	4 May	7	28473	SOLIMONT	3S / SC	£223	£60	£163	£147
	Luton	Costa De Almeria	5 Jun	7	28338	MEDITERRANEO PARK	3T / HB	£327	£60	£267	£241
	Luton	Rhodes	18 May	7	29118	VEL MARIE	BB	£305	£60	£245	£221
20% OR ABOVE	Stansted	Costa Dorada	17 Jun	7	28275	PLAYA PARK	3S / HB	£319	£60	£259	£234
	Stansted	Gran Canaria	26 May	14	28416	GREEN SEA	3T / SC	£289	£50	£239	£216
	Stansted	Majorca	15 Jun	14	28031	FIESTA APARTMENT COMPLEX	3T / SC	£320	£60	£260	£234
	Birmingham	Tenerife	13 Jul	14	28384	TEDEMAR	3T / SC	£364	£55	£309	£279
	Bristol	Costa Dorada	10 Jun	14	28273	AVENIDA PARK	3T / HB	£389	£60	£329	£297
	Cardiff	Costa Del Sol	4 May	14	28335	ITALI	3T / HB	£400	£60	£340	£306
	East Midlands	Ibiza	28 Jul	7	28140	ESTANYOL	3S / BB	£319	£50	£269	£243
	East Midlands	Turkey	14 May	14	29304	MONTABELLO	3T / HB	£369	£60	£309	£279
	Gatwick	Costa Blanca	5 Jun	7	28312	NO PARK	3T / HB	£358	£60	£298	£269
	Gatwick	Costa D'Or	15 Jul	14	28235	THALASSA	3T / SC	£369	£60	£309	£279
	Gatwick	Majorca	6 Jun	7	28059	SUN HOTEL PLAYA D'OR	3T / HB	£420	£60	£360	£324
	Gatwick	Malta	13 May	14	28491	BUNGURIA HOLIDAY COMPLEX	3S / HB	£345	£50	£295	£265
	Gatwick	Turkey	1 Jul	14	29340	KALYAN	3T / BB	£365	£60	£305	£275
	Gatwick	Zakynthos	9 May	14	29179	FAMILY INN	BB	£378	£60	£318	£287
	Luton	Cyprus	15 May	14	29064	MALIA DAEDALUS	BB	£365	£60	£305	£275
	Luton	Fuerteventura	3 Jun	14	28453	CALETA GARDENS	4T / SC	£299	£50	£249	£225
	Luton	Rhodes	21 May	14	29118	RODOS PALACE	5T / SC	£369	£50	£319	£288
	Stansted	Majorca	31 Aug	14	28007	PALMERAS PLAYA	3T / SC	£355	£50	£305	£275

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Threat of violence returns to Hebron hours after pullout

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN HEBRON

ISRAELI troops withdrew from most of Hebron at dawn yesterday, but within hours the signs of conflict had returned.

A curfew was clamped on Palestinians living near the remaining Jewish settlers and Arabs chanted the praises of Yihya Ayyash, the "master of the suicide bomb".

As leaders of the 450 settlers rent their clothes in grief for the loss of part of their homeland to *habbim* (terrorists), the 100,000 Arabs freed from military occupation after 30 years set off fireworks and roared cells in the British-built military headquarters where many had been imprisoned.

Despite the portraits of Yasser Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority, now displayed at roadsides, many of the newly liberated Hebronites did little to disguise the fact that their true loyalties lay with Hamas, the militant Islamic group which opposed the deal that gave them freedom.

In the shadow of the imposing Tegar Fort (named after a British Mandate security

chief, Charles Tegar) which had been Israeli military headquarters until its transfer at 6.10am, Palestinian policemen looked on benignly as chants in memory of Ayyash ("The Engineer"), the murdered Hamas bomb-maker, filled the air.

Had the Jewish settlers living in heavily fortified buildings in the heart of the city below been present, their paranoia about the future would have been intensified. "Ayyash, Ayyash, we will be joining you in paradise," sang an impromptu choir of young men with unsmiling eyes and women in Islamic headscarves, more common in Hebron than elsewhere in the West Bank. "The Israeli occupiers should never forget: we are all Ayyash."

Even the most respectable of those who had come to the abandoned symbol of foreign rule, now sporting a Palestinian flag on its 80ft antenna, had stories to tell of hardships under the Israeli occupiers who seized control from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Dr Anwan Maswadeh, a

Palestinian GP, had brought Reema, his nine-year-old daughter, to show her the cells where he spent one and a half years for membership of Fatah, Mr Arafat's PLO faction. "When I last came here I was blindfolded and in handcuffs. Now I am a free man, arriving in the sunshine with my daughter," the doctor said. "But my optimism is tempered because the settlers are still among us. I am afraid there will be more trouble."

It was only a few minutes' drive to the Jewish cemetery on the opposite hillside where settlers were conducting their ceremony of mourning, with Dov Lior, a prominent rabbi, cutting each of their shirts with scissors before they tore them in a grieving ritual.

The route took us through the market where the curfew was imposed after scores of Palestinians armed with stones and bottles began to pelt some of the 2,500 Israeli troops left to guard the settlers. Tempers flared as the settlers were left free to walk at will.

As Rabbi Lior led the nodding heads in reciting Psalm 142, many of the Jews were red-eyed from recent tears. Watching the men grieving was Geula Cohen, a retired right-wing politician and one-time radio operator for Jewish underground terrorists who fought the British. Her emotions were heightened by the knowledge that her son is one of the members of the Cabinet who backed Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, in pushing through the pullout decision.

"It is a day of shame for Netanyahu, who caved in to US pressure," Mrs Cohen said. She pointed to the large swath of the City of the Patriarchs now under Palestinian control. "It is the beginning of a [Palestinian] state. I am sure we [the Israelis] will come again and free it again, but only in a very bloody war."



Riot police bar a lone protester's way to the Myongdong cathedral yesterday

Seoul police ring cathedral

FROM REUTERS IN SEOUL

SOUTH KOREAN police yesterday tightened a security noose around a Seoul cathedral where a strike leader was hiding from arrest, and the ruling party scorned an offer by the fugitive for a televised debate.

Special force officers trained in unarmed combat guarded approaches to Myongdong cathedral, while police checked cars approaching the building.

The "grabbers"—hardened by years of street fighting—are deployed during riots to

rush into crowds and make arrests. South Korea's Roman Catholic cardinal appealed to President Kim to "resolve the situation with dialogue", a presidential spokesman said.

Kwon Young Kil, the strike leader and president of the outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, challenged Lee Hong Koo, the chairman of the New Korean Party, to a debate over the new labour law that has sparked more than three weeks of stoppages. Mr Kwon called on the party chairman

personally to square off with him on camera. He also demanded that the Government must guarantee his safety from arrest.

The New Korea Party rejected the offer, on the ground that Mr Kwon was a fugitive, and called on unions to put forward more suitable candidates. "There cannot be guarantees of safety for people who have legal problems," the party said. The strikes were wound down last night and there were just pockets of worker resistance.

Spain retreats on Rock passports

Madrid: Spain denied yesterday that it is soon to stop recognising passports issued in Gibraltar (Tunku Varadarajan writes). The announcement was an attempt to close a growing rift between Spain and Britain over the Rock.

The prospect of the Spanish treating as obsolete a 1960 Anglo-Spanish visa-waiver treaty, under which Gibraltarians acquired the right to travel freely to Spain, had sent shock waves through the Rock this week. Yesterday Madrid climbed down, saying the Government was "only studying the possibility of changes to the treaty". Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, is to visit Gibraltar next week and hold talks with Abel Matutes, his Spanish counterpart.

Timor murder plot 'foiled'

Sydney: Supporters of Bishop Carlos Belo, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, foiled a plot to assassinate him in Dili, the capital of East Timor, by beating to death an Indonesian soldier on Christmas Eve, Hilton Deakin, the Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, said. The news was given in a fax from a prominent East Timor Roman Catholic. Indonesian troops invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975 and made it their 27th province in 1976. The move has not been recognised by the United Nations. (Reuter)

Serb politician's suicide bid

Pale: Doctors battled to save the former Bosnian Serb Vice-President, Nikola Koljevic, who was in a coma yesterday after shooting himself in the head in a suicide attempt, political sources said. Mr Koljevic, 60, a Shakespeare scholar and former Sarajevo University professor, shot himself in his office in the seat of the Serb republic's Government at Pale. Dense fog prevented doctors from flying Mr Koljevic to Belgrade immediately after the shooting. (Reuter)

Maputo backs game park

Maputo: Mozambique has granted final approval for a private game reserve which the US-based company behind the project claims is the largest in the world. The scheme encompasses 580,000 acres in the Maputland region of southern Mozambique, Blanchard Mozambique Enterprises said. US millionaire James Blanchard presented an outline of the project to President Chissano in 1995. (Reuter)

Montenegrin minister dies

Belgrade: Janko Jeknic, Foreign Minister of the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro, died in a road accident. He was 46. Mr Jeknic's car collided with a bus outside the capital, Podgorica. He had served as head of protocol and consul for economic affairs in the Yugoslav consulate in Milan, Italy, before becoming Foreign Minister. (Reuter)

Reeve back in hospital

New York: The wheelchair-bound actor Christopher Reeve was admitted to hospital with a blood clot behind his knee (Quentin Letts writes). Mr Reeve, the former Superman star disabled in a horseriding accident two years ago, is likely to be kept under observation for a few days before going home.



A rabbi helps a Hebron settler to tear his shirt in ritual mourning over the handover of the city to Palestinian rule

THE SUNDAY TIMES

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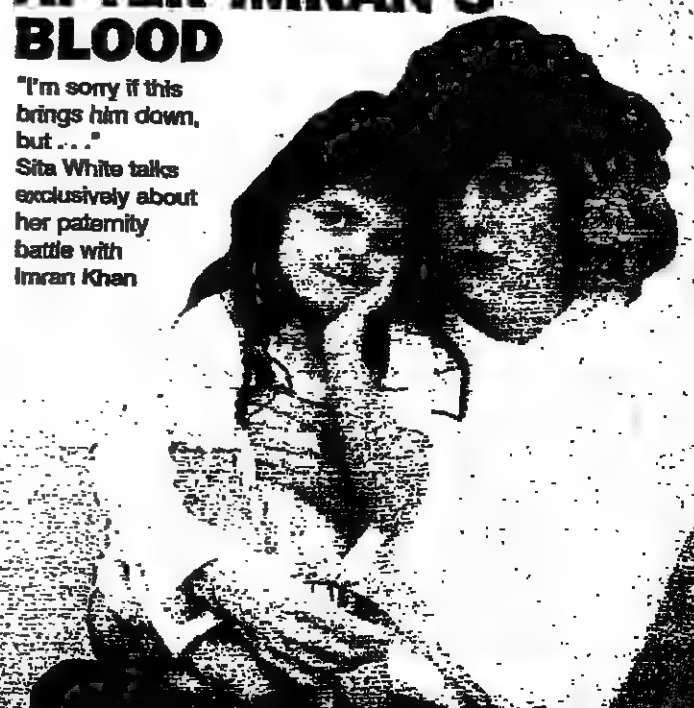


MURRAY ON CRIME

"The way to restore a lawful society is to impose swift and sure punishment." Charles Murray—the social commentator who identified the Underclass—in the final part of a major series on crime and punishment

AFTER IMRAN'S BLOOD

"I'm sorry if this brings him down, but..." Sita White talks exclusively about her paternity battle with Imran Khan



THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

Gingrich remains defiant in face of \$300,000 penalty

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

LAWYERS agreed last night that Newt Gingrich should be ordered to pay a penalty of \$300,000 (£180,000) after the special counsel investigating ethics charges against the House Speaker released a highly condemnatory report.

The size of the recommended fine is likely to dramatise the nature of Mr Gingrich's admitted ethics violations. But it will not prompt him to resign, as many Democrats had hoped.

James Cole, who recommended a hefty fine, a reprimand and a federal investigation, agreed tentatively with lawyers representing Mr Gingrich that he should pay \$300,000 and be admonished in writing by his colleagues when the House votes on the issue next week.

The large financial penalty has been designed to reimburse the ethics committee for extra work done as a result of inaccurate statements submitted under the Speaker's name.

The fine comes to nearly twice the Speaker's annual salary of \$171,500, and is much higher than Mr Gingrich and his colleagues had expected. If the House votes to sanction the penalty against Mr Gingrich on Tuesday, he will be the first Speaker ever disciplined by his peers. Only two weeks ago he became the first Rep-

lican re-elected to the office in 1996.

Republicans said that the agreement between the lawyers had been reached during a private session of the House ethics committee yesterday in which members had reviewed the 200-page document, the culmination of a year-long inquiry by Mr Cole.

The report, the critical element in the committee's investigation of whether Mr Gingrich had misused charitable donations for political purposes, was distributed to all 435 members of the House last night as public hearings into the matter opened.

Part of the document was said to recommend a full inquiry by the Justice Department on the apparent use of charitable contributions for partisan political purposes. Last night Republicans were playing down the size of the penalty and privately were hoping that the impending inauguration of President Clinton would overshadow any political damage before the Tuesday vote.

The Democrats had been dealt a public relations disaster from their own ranks earlier in the week when Jim McDermott, the leading Democrat on the ethics committee, was forced to resign from the inquiry. Mr McDermott was accused by his opponents of

deliberately leaking an illegally recorded tape involving Mr Gingrich to several leading American newspapers and the FBI announced an immediate investigation. His resignation deflected the worst embarrassments of the Gingrich affair and Republicans were able both to truncate the public hearings and to ensure that Mr Cole's evidence was kept to a minimum.

Nevertheless, as speculation increased on Capitol Hill last night in advance of the report's release, Mr Gingrich's allies were hoping that the special counsel had gone no further in his comments than a statement of violation issued last month, which said that Mr Gingrich should have taken legal advice about the use of tax-exempt funds.

It cited conflicting remarks by him about whether his political action committee had received money from non-profit groups, whether it was involved in financing a college course he was teaching and whether the course had partisan objectives.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome of the ethics case, Mr Gingrich was left severely wounded by the process. A new cadre of ambitious Republicans is already emerging to fill the vacuum left by the mastermind of the Republican revolution.

American rocket explodes in fireball

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

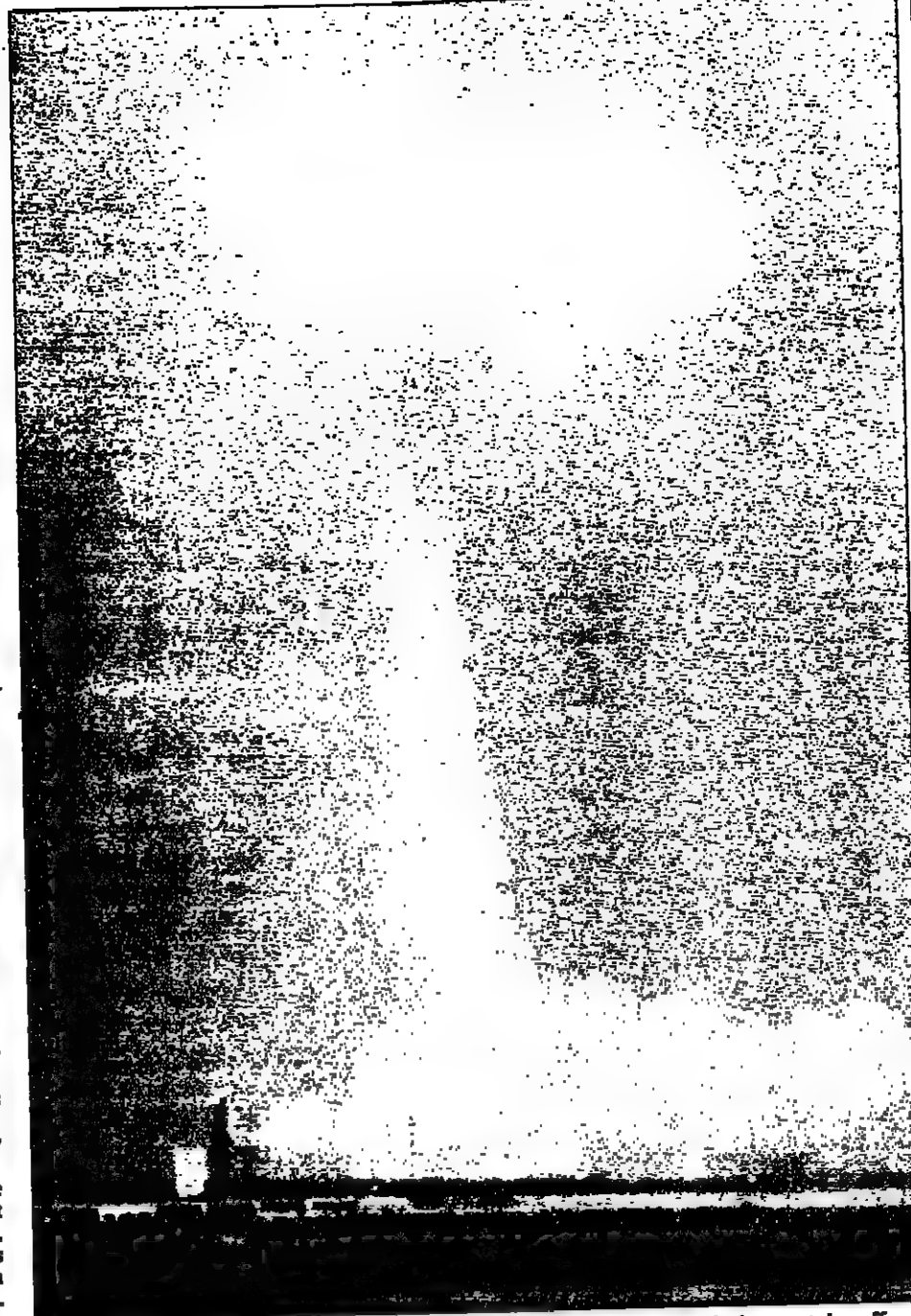
A DELTA-2 rocket exploded spectacularly on take-off from Cape Canaveral yesterday. A shower of fireballs rained down on the space centre, and smoke was still billowing from the launch-pad half an hour later. The rocket, built by McDonnell Douglas Corporation, was carrying a global positioning satellite worth \$55 million (£34 million) into orbit for the US Air Force.

Larry McCracken, a spokesman for McDonnell Douglas, said the explosion of the three-stage rocket occurred less than four seconds into the flight and even before the rocket had cleared the tower to which it had been tethered for the launch.

Karl Ronstrom, a photographer who was taking pictures of the launch from a distance of two miles, said that after the main explosion he heard four or more minor explosions, along with the smoke and fireballs.

The Air Force had no immediate explanation for the explosion, but ordered an investigation. No one was hurt. The launch had been delayed from Thursday because of high winds.

The Delta is regarded as the world's most reliable rocket. It has been in use since 1960, and yesterday's launch was the 241st, of which fewer than ten have failed to reach orbit. The last one to explode was in May, 1986.



The rocket carrying a US Air Force navigational satellite explodes on take-off

Fujimori hints at talks on prisoners

FROM GABRIELLA GAMINI SOUTH AMERICA CORRESPONDENT

PRESIDENT FUJIMORI of Peru yesterday indicated that he is prepared to discuss the Tupac Amaru rebels' demand for the release of hundreds of their imprisoned comrades.

Senor Fujimori told a Japanese television network that the subject may be among issues to be discussed in formal talks that are due to start next week. However, the President maintained his characteristic tough line and said the "Government cannot approve such a liberation".

The rebels released last night one hostage from the Lima residence of the Japanese Ambassador, the first to be freed since the beginning of the year. He was Luis Valencia Gerardo, a former chief of Peru's anti-terrorism police. Seventy-three hostages remain in captivity.

The rebels have agreed to participate in talks with the Government only if the release of fellow guerrillas was on the agenda. Western diplomats in Lima said the talks would be held in a church in the capital.

Senor Fujimori is under growing pressure to find a solution to the hostage crisis. He has so far resisted the possibility of a commando raid to free the hostages because Japan vociferously opposes a military plan. Among the hostages are Morihisa Aoki, the Japanese Ambassador, and at least 20 Japanese executives.

On Thursday, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, the rebels' leader, kept up the war of nerves with Senor Fujimori by saying that he would not take part in talks until the Government allows imprisoned rebels to begin receiving visits again. Visits to high-security prisons had been stopped since December 17 when the Tupac Amaru took their hostages. The Red Cross has also been barred from the prisons. It remained unclear whether the demand by Senor Cerpa had been met.

Last night there were indications that Canada was willing to act as go-between, with Ottawa prepared to guarantee the safe transit of the rebels out of the country.

Doubts grow over Cosby murder witness

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

POLICE faced a setback in their investigation into the murder of Bill Cosby's son yesterday as doubts arose over the credibility of their only witness.

A white woman in a mini-skirt and short fur coat who said she saw Ennis Cosby, 27, shot dead appeared to change her story during day-long questioning by detectives.

The only son of the much loved comedian had pulled off a freeway in a prosperous and relatively safe West Los Angeles neighbourhood to change a flat tyre on his Mercedes sports car when he

was shot once in the head early on Thursday.

Protest calls to CNN television after it broadcast pictures of his body beside the car in a pool of blood prompted an on-air apology. But television crews continued to besiege the Cosby family homes in New York and Los Angeles.

Police said that robbery was the most likely motive for the killing, even though nothing appeared to have been taken from the \$130,000 (£77,000) car. The mystery deepened with reports that when his tyre burst at 1.15am, Cosby was on his way to visit the woman who later claimed to have witnessed his murder.

He contacted her by cellphone and

asked her to drive out and help by shining her headlights while he changed the tyre, CBS reported. The station said that the woman, 40, changed her account during interviews with detectives, saying she drove away on seeing a white man approach Mr Cosby and returned to find him dead. She is said to work in the entertainment business and to have met Mr Cosby only days earlier.

The young man had a reputation for being unaffected by his father's huge wealth and fame. He was 6ft 3in and was studying for a master's degree in remedial education. The most eloquent tribute to him came from his father: "He was my hero".



Bill Cosby and his wife Camille with their son, Ennis, right, in New York yesterday



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Norwegian nears pole

THE Norwegian explorer, Berge Osland, was last night just a few miles short of completing his epic journey across the Antarctic - alone, unaided and on foot (Roger Maynard writes).

Although he experienced whiteout conditions yesterday morning, 25 miles southwest of his target - New Zealand's Scott Base - he resumed his 1,675-mile journey in the afternoon. Staff at Scott Base forecast that he would reach there later today.

Some of the 45 people at the base were set to escort him on the home stretch. "A message

has been relayed to us that the first thing he wants is a cup of tea," said Julian Tangaere, New Zealand's Scott Base leader, who has been tracking Mr Osland's progress.

This is Mr Osland's second attempt to cross Antarctica on foot. His last attempt failed when he suffered from frostbite. This time his main rival, the British explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, gave up on December 12 after suffering from kidney stones.

Mr Osland, 34, who set out more than two months ago, is towing a sledge with about 400lb of supplies.

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Sofia's old dictator dreams of making a comeback

**FROM RICHARD OWEN
IN SOFIA**

He enjoyed a debonair lifestyle in Florence and Venice where his family originated. The family once owned the palazzo on the Grand Canal in which Byron lodged, and he was a leading light in the international "Save Venice" campaign, conducting a pass-

Nicholas Green, 7, died when armed men tried to hold up the family's hired car in Calabria. Two mafiosi were acquitted on Thursday. Nicholas's organs were donated for transplants in Italy.

The palazzo in which he died is owned by another branch of his family, the Rucellais. Neighbours said there had been rows between the family and tenants of the building who allegedly had underworld connections.

Mr Zhivkov's former subjects are lucky nowadays if they can get hold of bread at all. The parliament, which reopened under heavy police guard on Wednesday after days of riots and street protests, has now approved the emergency import of wheat to avoid a complete bread shortage. The newspaper *Trud* said wheat stocks in Bulgaria would run out by March. Bread prices, it said, had risen elevenfold in a year. The average monthly wage is the equivalent of £12, with a loaf costing 30p.

Sofia students dangle on ropes outside the university in an "airstrike" protest

— that Bulgaria should become a Soviet republic.
Opposition leaders also re-

call that when Mr Zhivkov was ousted in 1989 he was charged with embezzlement of state funds and investigated for support for international terrorism and suppression of the rights of Bulgaria's one million ethnic Turks.

As the wave of protests

continues, more doctors are joining the strikes, saying hospitals can no longer afford to heat wards or feed patients, let alone treat them. One surgeon at a children's cancer ward said it was "at the end of its resources", and he would soon have to decide which of his young patients would live and which would die.

Zhirkov: "the people still love me"

**FROM ROBIN LODGE
IN MOSCOW**

This week rank-and-file traffic police in Moscow disclosed that they were preparing a crackdown on foreign drivers in retaliation. Last night the police confirmed that they had carried out a two-day operation against cars registered to foreigners, easily identified by their red or yellow number plates, although a spokesman denied any connection with the incidents in the United States.

"There has been a sharp rise in the number of accidents involving foreigners, so we thought it was time for a blitz," Viktor Priznyakov, of the Moscow State Motor Inspectorate, said. "It was the first of its kind, but I can tell you it will not be the last." According to the police, more than 200 offences were recorded, 26 cars were ordered off the road and 52 drivers fined. American drivers were found to be the worst offenders.

FROM PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

The Swiss Government welcomed the correction while regretting that "on the basis of incorrect information Switzerland has been condemned hastily and out of hand, damaging the country's image".

In a revised version of a report on a 1946 reparation agreement concluded by Switzerland and the Allies, the Foreign Office in effect admitted that its researchers had made a mistake on a key

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THE TIMES SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

Queen Bee of press sets Washington buzzing

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

THE lofty American newspaper publisher, Katharine Graham, has astonished her family, friends and colleagues by writing a highly personal autobiography which includes details of her husband's philandering and his suicide.

Mrs Graham, owner of *The Washington Post* and regarded as a powerful woman of discreet taste, has unburdened her soul to a remarkable degree. In her book she not only chronicles her newspaper's distinguished coverage of the Watergate scandal and her business life, but also examines her failings as a wife and details the affair that her late husband, Phil, had with a young Australian reporter.

Before the book was sent to her publisher, Mrs Graham's daughter, Lilly, asked her: "Are you sure you want to put this in?" Her decision to proceed was all the more remarkable given the queasiness of American broadsheets, such as the *Post*, when it comes to examining the private lives of public figures.

Mrs Graham discloses that

her husband nicknamed her "Porky" and describes the mood swings of his manic depression which would lead eventually to his suicide.

R. W. Apple Jr. of *The New York Times*, a veteran newspaperman and a friend of Mrs Graham, said yesterday that the American capital was surprised by the personal nature of the memoirs. "A lot of this stuff has been whispered about before but I didn't ever expect to see it in a book by her," he said. "Kay has written the book she always said she couldn't write."

In addition to the details about her marriage — which

include the almost-deranged letter that her husband wrote to her when it seemed their marriage must end — Mrs Graham describes her shortcomings as a mother. She also recalls her subservience to the overpowering Mr Graham, how she "seemed to enjoy the role of doormat wife" and how even after his death she was a tremulous rabbit, liable to weep at bad news.

The picture she draws of herself is very different to the collected newspaper proprietor who has known most of the key figures in American politics in the past 30 years and whose insistence on pro-

ceeding with the Watergate story helped to bring down the Nixon Administration.

Mrs Graham, 79, also reflects on her close relationships with many of the politicians, such as Henry Kissinger and, early on in his presidency, Richard Nixon. Although she has long been regarded as an integral part of the class Washington Establishment, she is viewed by friends as the Queen Bee of the "liberal media conspiracy" against the Right.

The Katharine Graham of "Belway" society, supremely connected, and supervising a handsome salon from her large, park-lined house in Georgetown, will never be seen in the same way. *Personal History* may be one of the most surprising and candid self-portraits by a press baron.

Unlike some public figures, Mrs Graham wrote the book by herself. "Considering that she is not a professional writer, it is written pretty well," Mr Apple said. "In fact, she writes rather better than some of my reporters."



Katharine Graham tells of her late husband's philandering in *Personal History*

France angers Iraq with Uday ban

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN NICOSIA

IRAQ has rebuked France for refusing to allow President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday, enter the country for hospital treatment following an assassination attempt last month. It said that French businessmen could lose lucrative contracts as a result.

"We consider that the French Government has committed a monumental error," thundered the government daily, *al-Thawra*, in a front-page editorial. "This inhuman attitude will harm France."

The tirade was seen as further evidence that the condition of Uday, 33, is far more serious than first admitted. It came just days after Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, praised France for leaving Britain and the United States to police the six-year-old exclusion zone over northern Iraq.

France was Iraq's main Western arms supplier before the Gulf War and Baghdad still owes France about £3 billion.

Reclusive Salinger to publish first book in 34 years

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

J. D. SALINGER, whose *The Catcher in the Rye* became the totem of disillusionment for a generation, next month publishes his first book for 34 years.

The reclusive author, 78, who has devoted his energies for three decades to shielding himself from public attention, has banned any publicity about the book: even details of the number of copies printed. News of the forthcoming publication leaked out despite his wishes through a bookstores' Internet pages.

However, to the disappointment of fans who had hoped for a further installment of the Glass family, characters central to much of Mr Salinger's fiction, the book, entitled *Hapworth 16, 1924*, is believed to be essentially a reprint of an 80-page story which took up almost the whole of the June 19, 1965, edition of *The New Yorker* magazine.

The narrator of the story is Seymour Glass, who features in many Salinger stories. The book takes the form of a letter to his family, home from the seven-year-old Seymour while at summer camp. When first published, the story attracted savage reviews. The *Los Angeles Times* commented in 1983 that it "was widely regarded as narcissistic, prolix and ultimately obscure in its intent". It has, however, remained a collector's item.

Authors John Updike and Mary McCarthy also argued that Mr Salinger's obsession with the Glass family, the subject of his novel *Franny and Zooey*, was damaging his fiction. Nonetheless, the publi-



Salinger, ordered agent to throw away fan mail

lisher, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, is being hailed as "the discovery of the decade". Between 1951 and 1963 Mr Salinger published four books: *Catcher*, *Nine Stories*, *Franny and Zooey* and *Raise the Roof*. *Beam*.

He never allowed his work to be republished or collected in anthologies. Since the 1965 appearance of *Hapworth*, he has published nothing. He is judged to be one of the most influential postwar American novelists.

However, since *Catcher* in 1951, he has retreated into his much-heralded isolation, at his compound. He married in 1953 but divorced in 1967, and lived in seclusion in New Hampshire. He has ordered his agents to throw away fan mail unopened.

A few months ago, he instructed them to track down the author of a World Wide Web page devoted to his books: the page has been withdrawn.



Archbishop Tutu reading a card from a well-wisher

Tutu has operation for prostate cancer

FROM RAY KENNEDY IN JOHANNESBURG

ARCHBISHOP Desmond Tutu, the former head of the Anglican Church in South Africa and 1984 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has been diagnosed as suffering from prostate cancer.

John Allen, his secretary, said in Cape Town yesterday that the archbishop, 65, had undergone surgery on Wednesday when most of the prostate was removed. More tests would be carried out to ascertain if the disease had spread.

Archbishop Tutu sounded as cheerful as ever when he was telephoned at a private clinic on Thursday. He said: "The doctor is very pleased with my progress and I am

sitting in bed watching the cricket [the Third Test between South Africa and India]. I expect to be in hospital until the weekend and off work for about three weeks. I would like to thank people for their wishes and prayers."

He retired last June as Archbishop of Cape Town and head of the Anglican Church in South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho and St Helena, but postponed plans to take up a study fellowship in Atlanta, Georgia, in order to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which is hearing testimony about human rights abuses during the apartheid era.

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20 OVERSEAS NEWS

New spouse of Czech President cracks down on 60-a-day man as fears about his health persist



The Havels during their civil wedding ceremony in Prague town hall this month

Wife stubs out Havel habit

PRAGUE FILE
by ROGER BOYES

DAGMAR HAVEL (or more correctly Havelová) has started to crack down on her newly wed husband, Vasek, she has been telling friends, is strictly banned from lighting up: it is the beginning of the end of the 60-a-day man. Vasek, of course, is Václav Havel, the sardonic playwright, dissident intellectual and President of the Czech Republic.

In short, a man with his own mind. But he knows better than to defy his actress bride who starred in such classics as *The Vampire of Ferrara*. In that 1970s film, still vivid in the memory, the future First Lady played a racing driver who turns her into a vampire by sucking blood out of her feet. One scene, particularly difficult to film, shows her topless and nibbling the neck of Jiri Menzel, the film director.

The Havel wedding this month took almost everybody by surprise, coming only eight days after the President left

hospital. Mr Havel, who is 60, had half his right lung removed because of cancer. Doctors now say they have found a second, benign, growth and Prague rumours suggest that the President's prognosis may not be quite as rosy as has been suggested in official bulletins. That may explain the rush to marry Dagmar, 43, who is a long-standing friend.

Mr Havel is certainly aware of his mortality. His first wife, Olga, his companion during the dissident years, died of cancer almost exactly a year ago, aged 62. He had no children with Olga, although he has gained a stepdaughter through his marriage to Dagmar.

That first marriage was regarded as one of the great love matches in the dissident movement, although he had his share of girlfriends. Vasek and Olga would talk books, drink coffee and, of course, smoke at the Café Slavia, the most remarkable of Prague's literary hangouts just opposite the National Theatre. One of Mr Havel's most moving books, compos-

ed in a communist prison, is entitled *Letter to Olga*.

Czechs, therefore, have had a hard time accepting his remarriage to a "lightweight" actress. Mr Havel says that Olga on her deathbed told him to remarry quickly because "I am not a man who can live alone".

The smoking ban on Mr Havel makes sense for a man recovering from lung cancer.

Drinkers cheer return of absinthe

ABSINTHE makes the heart grow fonder, especially in Prague. Before his 60th birthday President Havel ordered a crate of the potent pale green drink and has inspired poets and driven artists mad, made them blind and, in the case of Vincent van Gogh, rendered them earless.

Czechs, of course, are passionate beer drinkers and Prague men parade their distended stomachs like campaign medals. Now absinthe — banned almost everywhere else in the world because of its alcoholic strength — has become the fashionable drink.

Absinthe was created by the French 200 years ago as an elixir, and the health-conscious Czechs took to it from the start. Today it is part of the Prague scene, particularly among the many hundreds of Americans who would-be writers who believe that the Czech capital is the modern equivalent of Paris in the 1920s.

Hemingway, who learnt something about absinthe as a young journalist in the French capital of the 1920s, recorded after a Parisian drinking bout: "Got tight last night on absinthe... did nice tricks." Havel's reaction to the arrival of his crate of absinthe is not known, shortly after it was delivered, he went under the surgeon's knife.



Havel in the days before the domestic smoking ban

ward to the meeting, the President is regarded as one of the few pro-German enthusiasts in the Czech political class.

When Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister, visited Mr Havel after his recent operation he found him

unable to speak, his face a jumble of feeding tubes. Herr Kinkel showed the Sudeten debt to the patient and Mr Havel scribbled a love-letter on the paper and pointed to the German Minister. Herr Kinkel clearly was very touched.

Sudeten German saga nears end

HELMUT KOHL travels to Prague next week to sign the long-delayed document closing the chapter on the Sudeten Germans.

President Havel, apparently, will be well enough to see the German leader and Herr Kohl says he is looking for-

ward to the meeting, the President is regarded as one of the few pro-German enthusiasts in the Czech political class.

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Judge puts foot down over ankle-kissing

By RICHARD OWEN

A FACTORY worker and self-confessed foot fetishist was found guilty of "sexual violence" yesterday for kissing a girl, 16, on the ankle in public.

The man, 35, and named only by his initials, L.P., argued that he had been overwhelmed by a sudden fit of passion. But a court at

Bobano, near the Austrian border in northern Italy, ruled that he was guilty of assault.

The accused man told the court: "I know I did wrong, but women's ankles drive me crazy." The Bobano judge said L.P. had assaulted the girl last August, when he stopped his car and kissed her the street.

"I thought at first he wanted

to ask directions," the girl told police. Instead he kissed her on the ankle, she said. She was a 16-year-old girl, and the judge said she was "completely lost control".

"He grabbed her leg before

knocking down to plaster her ankle and then her entire face with unwanted kisses and licks, before biting her toes," the police report said. The girl screamed for help and her assailant drove off, but his victim made a note of the number plate and alerted police. The judge gave L.P. a one-year suspended jail sentence.

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OPINION

William Hogarth, born 300 years ago, would have been astonished at how tame satire has become

The inexorable passage of time flabbies the memory, as well as many other vital organs. And I was only ten in 1964. But am I wrong in thinking that the last great period of Tory rule ended with a general election that was generally credited as a victory, not for Labour, but for a brilliant generation of satirists working in theatre and TV?

Well, you can guess the next thought that my tortoise-like mind is forming. Here we are, after 18 years that have not exactly been free of banana-skins, rotten apples and the odd dodgy orange. You would have thought that our stages would be crawling with young clever-dicks making merciless fun of our political masters and mistresses. Not to mention our masters' mistresses. And vice versa. Or "vice worse", as someone once quipped.

But where are they? True, we have as mordant a bunch of political cartoonists and sketch-writers in newspapers today as at any time in history. Private Eye

OPERA 1

Andrew Shore plays the lead in an Opera North Falstaff that never achieves lift-off



THE TIMES ARTS

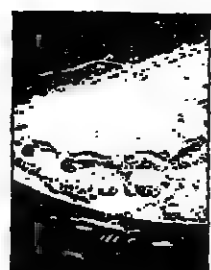
OPERA 2

Listen out for Charles Workman, a young American tenor who has the opera world at his feet

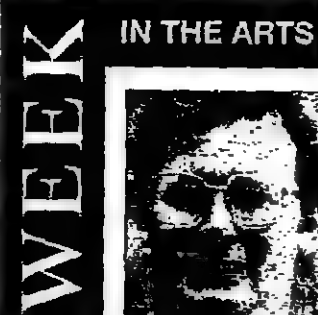


ON MONDAY

'What good is the Greenwich Millennium Exhibition to us northerners?' Melvyn Bragg asks



The stand-ups just won't be counted



RICHARD MORRISON

and its rival-comb-lately. Viz, his more targets than they miss. A very small number of TV comics — Rory Bremner, Ben Elton and the blissfully funny John Bird and John Fortune — are allowed to kick the odd political shin. And to our theatres a few stalwarts like David Hare still turn out plays that graze political knuckles.

The overwhelming bulk of British culture, however, is astonishingly apolitical. Yes, our young dramatists, screenwriters and brighter pop lyricists do venture into social areas, but there is an ironic "what's the use?" melancholy about the writing, not a caustic "let's mock this lot to death" mentality.

Elsewhere, there is nothing remotely political to be found. The "installations" that dominate our art galleries are wrapped in so many bloody enigmas that any

intended political message is indecipherable. And our TV comedies are mostly bland vignettes of loutish manners, light years from the abrasive wit of *Not the Nine O'Clock News* or *Yes, Minister*. I never thought I would yearn for the return of the puerile *Spitting Image*, but I do. At least it showed that there was somebody out there, in the anodyne Birdlands of modern TV, with sufficient mischief to throw a paper dart at Sir.

The depressing fact is that if Stalin's censor-in-chief, Andrei Zhdanov, was reborn in modern Britain he would gaze in admiration at the sullen acquiescence this Government gets from its arts community. "What's the trick?" he would ask. "Torture? Midnight calls on difficult theatre directors from your famed Special Branch? Raids on the Groucho Club?"

"No," we would reply. "The arts

world decided that being troublesome was too much trouble."

As if to point up the toothlessness of our era, the tercentenary of William Hogarth's birth falls this year. What would one give to

have a Hogarth, Pope, Swift or Defoe around now to satirise the windbaggy of a modern election with a few malicious barbs of 18th-century wit?

After all, they would hardly have to alter their scripts. Hogarth's *The Election Entertainment*, for instance, lampoons political sleazebags. Well, they ain't extinct yet. His *Marriage à la Mode* would need few changes to mock the antics of our present nobility. His *Four Stages of Cruelty*, an indictment of man's inhumanity to animals, is as relevant in the BSE era as in the 1750s. And don't forget that topical little engraving, *The Lottery*, a furious attack on governments that turn citizens into gambling addicts...

Why do we get so little sardonic commentary on our rabid political scene from the current bunch of creative people? Several rea-

sons. First, satirists feel redundant. When British public life, at least as reported in the tabloids, emerges as one long, scarcely believable satire in reality, what is the point of caricature?

Secondly, the ratings-obsessed TV companies are scared of causing offence. They want talent that is harmless enough to amuse millions. By and large, they don't need to censor performers: the process is more subtle. All those wickedly alternative stand-ups who are so "dangerous" on the Edinburgh Fringe voluntarily tone down their acts for TV — since they all basically crave fame, fortune and the approval of important people.

And thirdly, something similar goes on in subsidised theatre. It's not overt enough to be called self-censorship. It's simply that when

theatre directors become too frightened of losing their subsidy, or of upsetting local councillors, or of antagonising their largely middle-class, middle-aged core audience, they will always tend to pick the safe Ayckbourn or Godber in preference to a biting condemnation of capitalism by the local Angry Young Playwright.

That's the problem with subsidised theatre, of course, which its most fanatical supporters overlook. You think that public funding sets you free to be innovative and daring — but deep down you know that you won't bite the hand that feeds. The Soviet Union's theatres were superbly subsidised.

But when bishops make more controversial forays into political life than artists or writers do, there's something wrong. Wake up, luvvies! Add a bit of creative spice to the debates of the day. Offend the great and the good. Mock the comic-strip Macbeths lurking in the Commons tannery. You see, politics shouldn't be left to politicians. It's too funny for that.

OPERA: Rodney Milnes is disappointed by an unfocused first night from Opera North — but promises tonight's ENO audience an exceptional treat

Slim midwinter pickings

For some reason — irony? bloody-mindedness? — Matthew Warchus sees his new production of *Falstaff* for Opera North in midwinter. Well, I suppose it's topical. The horse trough on which the Fat Knight collapses after his ducking is frozen over, and when Fenton launches into his aria in Windsor Great Park it promptly starts to snow. Quite apart from open-air nookie being the last thing on any-

Falstaff
Grand Theatre, Leeds

one's mind, it does all act as a bit of a downer on this sunniest of operatic comedies, and Laura Hopkins's determinedly drab sets and costumes — the forest scene is especially unlovely — are no help. The effect of a false-perspective street scene is spoiled by amateurish use of the child-extras who are supposed to enhance it.

So the singers have to work hard to bring the show to life, and my goodness they do, with varying degrees of success. Andrew Shore wraps himself round the words of Amanda Holden's earthy and communitarian translation with enormous relish, but there are musical lines to be relished as well, and one longs for just a



Frances McCafferty and Margaret Richardson (rear), Rita Cullis and Yvonne Howard (front) bring colour to *Falstaff*

little more warmth and variety. Shore's *Falstaff* is young, vigorous and not especially fat — at least not by my standards — and his occasional old-age stumbles should fool no one. The melancholy post-ducking

monologue may be the highlight of his performance vocally, but you aren't really made to warm to this foolish, fond old man — odd, with so inventive a performer and experienced a director.

Perhaps Rita Cullis sensed that Thursday's performance needed a good shake, and by the last act her Alice Ford had taken command of the stage with authority and wit: the gender-war, though, is in general underplayed. Robert Hayward sang consistently powerfully as Ford, and his blank, shell-shocked face at the start of the jealousy monologue was the evening's single arresting visual image.

Frances McCafferty's mobile features and deliciously roly-poly figure made up for a certain lack of vocal weight in her Quickly, and Paul Nilon (Fenton) almost made you forget the hideousness of his costume with the simple elo-

Ten out of tenor

Sometimes you hear singers so gifted that it's tempting to keep quiet about them in case the world finds out and takes them away. Rodney Milnes writes. So it was with the young American tenor Charles Workman, whose guest appearances as Almaviva in the *Barber* and Ferrando in *Costa* at the Coliseum were so exceptional as to whet the appetite sharply for his Lindoro in ENO's new production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, opening tonight.

But it's too late to try to keep him secret: at last year's Rossini Festival in Pesaro he gave a sensational account of the technically terrifying role of Agorante in *Riccardo e Zoraide*, and moved straight into the top rank of Rossini tenors. Salzburg is after him, he's going back to Pesaro this year for *Moise*, and has succulent engagements in Paris and Geneva. And he made his professional debut only five years ago.

He lives in London with his wife, the British composer Alexandra Harwood (daughter of the playwright Ronald), and two young children. The couple met at the Juillard, where Workman went to study almost by chance. He was, he says, "a fair pianist and a good trumpet-player" — in other words, a practising musician, quite a rarity among opera singers. Interest in theatre led to a degree at Drew University, New Jersey, where he learnt acting, directing, lighting, stage-management — the lot. He started to study voice "as a dilettante", found out he could sing, and one thing led to another.

At Juillard he was lucky to find an exceptional teacher, Beverly Johnson, who also nurtured Renée Fleming. Workman remembers his study with her exclusively in terms of technique rather than vocal sound, and this is what

makes him so fearless a Rossini tenor, equal both to decorations and to high-flying vocal lines, where his tone retains its sweet, open quality.

What of tonight's Lindoro? "It's one of the most daunting roles I've ever done — it's all so high, right from the opening cavatina. Maybe it's a matter of doing something a few times. There are 12 performances of *Italian Girl* so hopefully I'll start feeling a bit more comfortable by the end."

• The *Italian Girl* is at the Coliseum (0171-632 8300)



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Does Crosland's socialism have a future for Blair?

Anthony Howard on a philosopher king who anticipated new Labour

Most political leaders have an ideological pedigree. One of the troubling things about Tony Blair is that he appears to have none. Asked whence he derives his inspiration, he may murmur something about Henry Campbell-Bannerman — adding (not wholly selflessly) that the victor of the great Liberal landslide of 1906 turned out to be far more radical a Prime Minister than anyone expected from his period as Leader of the Opposition.

Yet in choosing among Labour's own household gods — Attlee, Bevan, Gaitskell, Wilson — he has, for understandable reasons, proved reticent to a fault. There exists, however, one different role model to whom Mr Blair might have been expected to attach his colours, although revealingly he has never done so. He is that great "revisionist" figure of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the Oxford don turned practising politician Anthony Crosland.

Two just-published academic studies on the legacy of the only philosopher-king produced by the British Left in the second half of the 20th century deserve to be required reading, at least in the present Labour leader's office. If nothing else, they demonstrate just how hard is the way of the transgressor against party orthodoxy in modern British politics. (Crosland tried twice, in 1973 and 1976, to become first deputy leader and then leader of his party, but was rewarded with a derisory vote on each occasion.)

He was, though, a wonderfully glamorous personality who ended up, if for all too brief a ten-month period (he died aged 58 in February 1977), as James Callaghan's Foreign Secretary in the last Labour Government to hold office in Britain. But this was never his real claim to fame. That rests instead on the book he produced 40 years ago called *The Future of Socialism* and, to a lesser degree, on two volumes of essays he subsequently published, *The Conservative Enemy* (1962) and *Socialism Now* (1976).

If any individual tried to provide a largely bemused Labour movement with a route map for its progress through a world a great deal more complex than that ever envisaged by Karl Marx (or, for that matter, by R.H. Tawney), then Crosland's claim to have performed that service remains indisputable.

Why, therefore, should Mr Blair be so reluctant to identify with him? In diagnosis there was certainly very little to choose between them. Virtually everything that Mr Blair has said since becoming Labour's leader in July 1994 about the need for the party to alter its base and change its appeal finds its echo in the various things that Crosland wrote during Labour's last period in the wilderness, between 1951 and 1954.

In particular, his famous Fabian tract *Can Labour Win?* uncannily predates the entire thrust of the Blairite approach towards modernising the party. The attack on the cloth-cap image, the questioning of the undue reliance on the trade unions, the apprehension that Labour suffered from being perceived as the party of austerity rather than of prosperity — it is all there.

The difficulty and embarrassment arise when it comes to remedies. However much of a "revisionist" he may have been perceived in his own age and time, Crosland remained an unrepentant socialist (who, like Mr Blair, would never have been tempted to join the SDP). As late as 1974, he committed himself to the view that "equality and higher public expenditure are what divides us from the Tories".

There was, inconveniently, a radical passion about Crosland's beliefs — he was, for example, an inveterate opponent of public schools — that would probably

relegate him in the contemporary Labour Party, to the position of a Ken Livingstone or even a Tony Benn.

Rhetoric, though, is one thing; reality is quite another — and that was the story of Crosland's ministerial life. The Cabinet post he held for longest — 2½ years — was that of Minister of Education in Harold Wilson's first and second Governments. Here, it has to be said, his record was sadly disillusioning to all those who had taken at face value the bold, adventurous declarations with which he had excited a generation in *The Future of Socialism*.

Like Rab Butler, who in wartime probably had a greater opportunity, while doing his best to destroy the grammar schools Crosland did absolutely nothing about the public schools — merely kicking their future into touch via the palsied hands of a commission under Sir John Newsom. Worse than that, at the behest of his civil servants, he actually introduced — defying the Robbins report in the process — a steering and first-class passenger approach to higher education through "the binary system". This deliberately established a form of academic apartheid between the polytechnics and the universities in a shaming piece of snobbish discrimination that was left for a Tory, Kenneth Baker, to unscramble 21 years later. Not for the first time, a theoretician discovered that the practicalities of politics were rather different from those conceived in the ivory tower.

That is, no doubt, one reason why Mr Blair — who, to do him justice, has always set his face against raising expectations that he cannot fulfil — is shy of accepting Tony Crosland as his mentor. But there is another. It may sound a brutal thing to say but, despite his own far from emollient nature, Crosland consistently preached a socialism without tears.

For him, economic growth, which he took to be an unassailable fact of life at least in the modern Western world, was destined to provide the solution to all redistribution problems. If the cake got larger, then the rich would not mind if their share of it, while remaining roughly the same in absolute terms, became proportionately smaller. This was the alchemy that he saw as solving the central dilemma of democratic socialism, and about that, even while he still lived, he was proved demonstrably wrong.

But it remains true that Mr Blair could afford to drink more openly at the Crosland fountain than he does. For one thing, though he got America badly out of focus, maintaining — against J.K. Galbraith — that a classless society was synonymous with an equal one, domestically he got a great many things right, including the fact that public ownership was never the socialist panacea that it was once supposed to be. On top of all that, he remained the debonair Cavalier of British politics who ripped the hair-shirt from the body of the Labour Party.

Perhaps the most eloquent statement in the whole of his classic work, *The Future of Socialism*, is the one in which he writes: "Total abstinence and a good filing system are not now the right signposts to a socialist utopia." That was interpreted at the time as a veiled attack on Sidney and Beatrice Webb — who even exchanged wedding rings with the same motto *pro bono publico* inscribed on each of them. It is a measure of the curiously joyless, Roundhead message that Tony Blair, Gordon Brown — and Jack Straw, too — are currently delivering to the British electorate that it begins to look like a criticism of them as well.

Anthony Crosland: *The Mixed Economy and Crosland's Future: Opportunity and Outcome* by David Reisman are published by Macmillan Press at £45 each.

Roger Scruton looks forward to *Palestrina*, the greatest opera never before staged in Britain

Hans Pfitzner's *Palestrina* this month receives its British premiere at Covent Garden, 80 years after its first performance under the great Bruno Walter in Munich. The opera's neglect in this country is due to many factors, not the least being the enormous cast required for its second act, in which the composer attempts the astonishing feat of staging the Council of Trent as music drama. Far more decisive, however, has been Pfitzner's resolute stance against Modernism, and his brave attempt to forge a style which would be the true successor to the Wagnerian, without departing from total harmony.

The quiet originality of *Palestrina* has nothing of the shock value which would recommend it to forward-looking directors, and it says much for the temper of our opera houses that this great opera is being produced in the wake of Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* — an exorbitant work which merely pretends to be original, while in fact being no more than a ragbag of Modernist clichés.

Palestrina concerns an imagined spiritual crisis in the life of the 16th-century composer Pierluigi da Palestrina, when, during the Council of Trent, he is called upon to produce a Mass that would purify and renew the liturgical tradition of the Catholic Church. Into this simple

A musical offering to transcend our time

story Pfitzner reads another: his own predicament as a total composer, heir to the great tradition of German Romantic music, in an age of musical iconoclasm. And also another: the condition of modern Europe, having thrown away its religion, and facing the void. One man's effort to transcend his sterility and loneliness becomes, in Pfitzner's work, the effort of all of us to rededicate our earthly existence, and to face our inner life with confidence, despite the chaos and turmoil of the world outside.

From the very opening measures you hear the spiritual elevation of Pfitzner's music. Tonal it certainly is, in D minor with resonances of the old church modes. There are standard cadences and solid triads. Yet the harmonies are diverted from their natural tendency, and create an airy, spectral impression. For most of the magnificent first act we are presented with an ever-moving image of concord behind a veil of mild dissonance. Altered notes dislodge the structures above them,

so that they fall upon their neighbours. But everything happens naturally, peacefully, and with the clarity of a true polyphonist. The effect is like an echo in the vault of some great cathedral, and the drama creates a similar impression — as though relayed to us over a vast distance, its worldly accidents refined away, and only the spiritual essence remaining.

Pfitzner wrote his own libretto, and it is a minor masterpiece, containing lines of true poetry. The chastity of the music is matched by the purity of the characters, and even if you may wonder at the possibility of a drama in which the only woman — Palestrina's dead wife — is a ghost, this too has the ring of truth. The music gives reality and substance to this lonely, decent man, as he comes to terms with his three calamities: the death of a beloved wife, the self-destruction of Christian Europe, and the rise of a musical idiom which spurns

the old masters of harmony.

There is in Pfitzner's hero an indissoluble unity between private affections and artistic ideals. Palestrina is an ordinary Roman bourgeois for whom marriage and home are necessities, and whose artistic life thrives upon domestic peace. His peace is calamitously lost, and with it his creative urge. But he rediscovers both, and finds through music a proof of the apostolic idea, at the very moment when the squabbles and intrigues of the Council of Trent are threatening to destroy it. The outside world may dissolve in chaos, pure power may strut on the political stage, but the inner life remains and can be repossessed through music.

But the act of repossession is also an act of submission. The composer makes an offering of his music, on the altar built by the masters. To break with the past, to pour scorn on its inner wisdom, is to align oneself with the void. It is to lose the hope of inner peace, in a world where no other peace remains to us.

Serious painters, composers and writers of my generation are familiar with the predicament portrayed in Pfitzner's opera. We know it from Britten, Eliot, Moore, and Thomas Mann — and it is a predicament that does not concern artists only. To all of us it bequeathed a cultural inheritance which has proved itself through the greatness of its works of art. But we live in a time of loss — loss of faith and the natural affections which helped our forebears through their daily difficulties, and which inspired them to produce such permanent artistic records of their hopes and fears. Some of us seek to live without those things, and erect a pantomime of scorn with which to fortify scepticism. Others decide instead to hate their inheritance, and produce nihilistic drivel like *Die Soldaten*, or art of the Turner Prize variety, designed to make a mockery of the creative act and so to deny the fact of creation. Others simply retreat into their private pleasure dome, turn on the telly and wait for the end.

But the art of our civilisation endures, a permanent proof that human life has a meaning and that in living for the moment we invite our own destruction. Like Goethe's Faust, we must learn to possess our inheritance and to make it our own. For it is the source of our values, and the only thing that lasts.

The Green Man's grimace

Ubiquitous mystery of medieval art, this demon is beyond good and evil

The head is of a handsome man of mature years. His brow is furrowed and his eyes have a slight squint. His mouth is open. From it, indeed from the depths of his throat, emerge two giant hawthorn leaves. These sprout more leaves curling up round his cheeks and down under his chin. They become his whiskers and beard. They garland his head, then leap off into space. Nuts grow among them and thrushes collect to eat the nuts. Man becomes nature. From a human mouth spew all the lush riches of the world.

The face is carved in stone, high on a corbel in Sutton Benger church in Wiltshire. It is of a Green Man, for a thousand years the most common, and mysterious, symbol in English art. The Green Man inspired medieval sculpture, painting, drama and dance. He gave his name to a thousand inns, living on in their pub signs. He is Jack-in-the-Green, Man-in-the-Oak, the woodman, woodwose, ivyman, woodhouse, perhaps the May King, perhaps even Bottom.

The Green Man is the wild man of pagan and hereditary. He abducts women into the forest and devours unbaptised children. Though he features nowhere in Christian symbolism, Green Men peer down from the roofs and out of the walls of half the medieval churches in England. Some Green Men have greenery sprouting from their nostrils, others from their ears, others from the hair. Some squint, some grin, some sneer. All are in the bizarre act of exuding nature from the orifices of their heads.

I am intrigued by vast knowledge of minutiae. Somewhere on Namibia's Skeleton Coast is a man who leads safaris on his hands and knees with a magnifying glass. His prey are the insects coming up briefly for moisture at dawn. Those who return from such expeditions are mesmerised by the man's talent for bringing the minute to life. (Afterwards, they find dogs looking like elephants.)

Kathleen Basford is safari queen of the Green Men. This week she publishes a compendium of these creatures in all their glory. Her scholarship is microscopic rather than monumental. There is not much to say about Green Men and what she has to say she confines to just 20 pages of text and notes. The rest of her book is photographs taken by herself. They are astonishing.

ing. She has travelled Europe in search of Green Men, her husband stooping beneath the weight of her cameras.

She has found Roman Green Men (in the guise of Bacchus) and Saxon Green Men. She has found Normans and Goths. Their foliage spume adorns chests, tombs, bosses, benches, doorways and screens. At Ely a Green Man has his tongue hanging out. At Winchester the foliage appears to emanate from gigantic moustaches. Green Men occur in Germany and France and one even graces the façade of San Pietro near Viterbo.

Yet at the end we have no clearer idea of what these sinister characters really meant to their creators. Some time after the Reformation, all awareness of their significance appears to have sunk back into their Dark Ages past. To Basford they were "powerful fantasies of the eerie and the macabre... The eyes glare balefully or stare unfocused into space, full of dark foreboding."

The earliest foliage heads occur in late-Roman art. Another student of the phenomenon, William Anderson, has traced them to as far apart as Baalbeck and Trier in Germany. But it was Gothic architects who brought the leaf into full flower. On a portal at Chartres, faces seem to emerge and recede from the centre of individual leaves, like Cheshire cats or the speaking trees in cartoons. In England, by the 13th century, an arboretum of motifs surrounds the face, hawthorn, hops, vines, ivy and the favourite oak.

The most extraordinary effusion is in Southwell chapter house, where every niche is crowned with a face vomiting foliage. At Dorchester Abbey this act appears to cause the man intense pain. At Winchester he comes clothed and armed with sword and shield. At Lincoln he appears frantic to escape the ghastly vegetation growing from his mouth. At Ottery St Mary, in Devon, leaves sprout horribly from the pupils of the man's eyes. So particular are these portrayals as to defy generalisation that they are merely woodland demons. The nightmare figures are carefully delineated, as if referring to a specific message from the underworld.

Something was going on in the mind of these carvers, something that the pre-Reformation Church could not banish even from under its own roofs. Woods and forests



Green Man with hawthorn and birds, early 14th century, at All Saints Church, Sutton Benger, Wiltshire

dominated the English landscape at the time. Fear of trees was like fear of the sea. These mythical creatures of the woods are like the mermaids of the ocean. They were worshipped by the Druids. They were not just Green Men but nymphs and dryads, maypoles and wicker giants.

Green Men are mostly very human. Expressing fear in human form is a familiar way of warding it off. The woodmen of old are the aliens and extraterrestrials of today. Hence the Jack-in-Green of medieval pageant. Hence Puck. As Basford says: "It is when the fantasy is expressed most naturally that it seems most eerie and touches us most powerfully."

What is extraordinary about Green Men is that creatures so ostensibly evil should be celebrated not just as creatures of the forest but as fountains of nature. Equally odd is that this fountain-head should have come to dominate Christian iconography. The Green Man at times seems to preside over church worship. At Exeter he supports a Virgin and Child. At Southwell a Green Man

keeps watch over the heads of each canon during their deliberations. Almost wherever the fruit of the forest is used to grace the portals of a church, a pagan face looms out as the progenitor of greenery.

Some see in the Green Man a portrayal of renewal, part of the pagan/Christian ritual of the maypole and Rogantide. If he is the English native *Botticellus* — the Middle Ages must have been grim indeed. Basford rejects this interpretation. She sees the Green Man as in direct descent from the wood gods, often a version of the Devil himself. Another Exeter Green Man is stamped underfoot by the Virgin as the spirit of evil. No expression of life could be so universally ugly and disagreeable. If this is man going through the birth pangs of nature, his mouth, as vagina, then the message is even more obscure. (There are no Green Women, unless the image above the door in Clare church can be so described.)

I sense that we must leave the Green Man his Manichaean para-

dox. Whether evil or good, natural or spiritual, he has locked his secret away in stone. Perhaps he is just watching, as the past always watches, foretelling mortality. As the medieval verse goes: "So here's a thought your teeth to clench. All greenness comes to withering." Yet he leads us, as Basford found, "to some of the most beautiful places on earth, the churches and cathedrals of the Middle Ages. It is a strange demon that can lead us to such heavenly vistas."

The Green Man will have the last grimace. The natural landscape of the British Isles is not field or scrub or moorland. It is forest. Come Armageddon, leave agriculture to rot, and forest would again cover most of Britain. Trees will seize suburban gardens, motorway interchanges, hypermarkets and office blocks, as they seized whole monasteries after the Dissolution. Trees will invade the valleys and climb up the hillsides. In those trees, we shall again see the dark man, their mouths stuffed with leaves.

The Green Man is published by Boydell & Brewer at £35.

Left out

LOST in the confusion of Nicola Horlick's career at Morgan Grenfell Asset Management may also be her longed-for political career. Mrs Horlick was set on a career as a Labour politician.

Last year she attended a private City lunch with Peter Mandelson, the Labour MP and campaign director. Her office and immediate staff, among them Carl Sternberg, a fund manager in his late twenties, have been an important stopping-off point for Labour's sallies into the City.

Like Matthew Harding, the late Chelsea FC director and reinsurer who, who had hopes of being a Labour Cabinet minister, Mrs Horlick often spoke of how she fancied a role on a Labour government front bench. Her extraordinary business success, coupled with her homeliness — she was known around the office as Brenda,

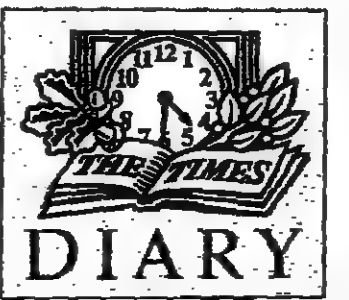
particularly after it was discovered she was a keen knitter — would have doubtless propelled her upwards in the Harriet Harman mould.

Now, however, she has fled to Frankfurt to lobby her German bosses. This comes after frantic nights and days on the telephone as she marshals her supporters, and an embarrassing tussle with Morgan Grenfell's personnel director in the lobby of her old offices.

All of which is bad news. Like other Labour hawks, there is little new Labour hates more than a panicker.

Dole cheque

FORMER Senator Bob Dole, the losing candidate in last year's American presidential election, is to appear in a television advertise-



ment for a credit card company.

Mr Dole, who is fast becoming the most popular loser in American politics, was paid an estimated \$500,000 for the commercial for Visa International. He intends to give a "sizeable portion" to charity.

The minute-long advertisement, which will be broadcast in the United States next weekend on the night of American football's Superbowl, shows Mr Dole visiting his home town of Russell, Kansas, and, although being welcomed by the locals, finding it impossible to buy provisions with a cheque. "It

looked like a lot of fun, it showcases my home town and it's a nice break from working on my inaugural address" — a wry recognition of the fact that had the election gone the other way, he would on Monday have been sworn in as President.

Noodled

FROM my drawer of confusing hotel instructions come these two clauses found at the Victory Hotel in Guangdong, China:

"5. Strictly forbid to go whoring, drug taking, gamble and engage in speculation. Strictly forbid to spit anywhere, strictly forbid scribble."

"7. Don't permit fighting, excessive drinking in hotel. The Protection Dept. of this hotel will handle the trouble maker, order of the hotel influencer."

Flat footed

MICHAEL Flatley, the petulant dancer who once starred in

Riverdance, has dismissed his management company, John Reid Enterprises. Not so long ago, Flatley paraded company acrobatically from *Riverdance* to set up his own company, managed by John Reid, a hugely respected figure who



has successfully managed Elton John for 20 or so years.

"We have been informed that Michael Flatley no longer wishes us to act as his manager," says a spokesman for Reid. "We regret we have no alternative but to recognise that the relationship cannot continue in those circumstances." All these manoeuvres will be of special interest to Princess Margaret, a keen Flatley fan, who has been to see *Riverdance* four times.

Geronimo

WHILE Diana, Princess of Wales, highlights the plight of mine victims in Angola, her ex-husband has also decided to broaden his portfolio. He has become patron of the British Parachute Association.

A tentative 'chutist himself — he has made a couple of jumps, neither particularly distinguished — the Prince nevertheless believes in the rigorous discipline and the refreshing nature of the sport. "A sport such as this," he says,



Prince of Wales jumper

"In a world such as we have today, goes a long way towards preparing some of our youth for the society of tomorrow." Earl Howe sees nothing contentious in the Prince's statement.

P.H.S



THE OLD BILL

Howard has moved some distance, but not far enough

The arm of the law should be long but not infinite. The original provisions of the Police Bill, which permitted the bugging and burglary of private property with the blessing of a chief constable, failed to find an appropriate balance between efficiency and liberty. At one stage the tacit collusion of the two front benches seemed enough for it to sail through Parliament. Protest at the offending clauses has ensured that rigorous scrutiny will be applied when the measure meets the House of Lords next week.

Both Michael Howard and Jack Straw have moved some distance over the past few days. Stung by the accusation that Labour was ditching its traditional concerns for civil rights in pursuit of electoral rewards, the Shadow Home Secretary has sought enhanced authority for the judiciary over the surveillance procedure. Mr Straw is now much closer to the position occupied by, among others, the Liberal Democrats. Abandoned by his accomplice, Mr Howard has deftly offered a raft of concessions designed to meet the torrent of opposition that has flowed from the legal establishment and elsewhere.

The Home Secretary's amendments are not insubstantial. The Government would now oblige chief constables who authorised such actions to notify the commissioner, a senior judge supervising this whole procedure, as soon as was practicable. In cases of unusual sensitivity, such as those involving doctors, lawyers, or journalists holding confidential information, the commissioner would be consulted within 48 hours. The period over which such covert operations could be conducted purely on the basis of

decisions reached by senior police officers would be scaled back.

Such alterations are to be welcomed as far as they go. But they are essentially procedural in nature and do not go far enough. The fundamental objection to this legislation has always been rooted in the principle that judges are better placed to weigh the relative merits of a police investigation against the liberties of individual citizens. The latest proposals from Mr Howard would tighten the subsequent scrutiny available to the commissioner over chief constables but would still place them in a secondary role. The core power of initiating such inquiries would reside with the police. This remains an unacceptable encroachment on British freedoms.

The stance now taken by Mr Straw is not completely satisfactory either. His suggestions would make prior approval from judges the norm but could grant a disturbingly large number of exceptions. Labour needs language of greater precision before the qualms of those concerned with civil liberties should be completely calmed.

Little evidence has been brought forward by the Home Office to explain why granting the judiciary such influence would undermine the effectiveness of this bill. Unless such an argument could be produced, and then found completely compelling, the House of Lords should exercise its proper function of review and reject this legislation. There is still time for Mr Howard to avoid a confrontation with the Upper House. The Government could accept that prospective consent from judges was essential. It would be well advised to do so.

HIS FELLOW AMERICANS

Brevity and principle should be Clinton's watchwords

On Monday, Bill Clinton has to deliver an inaugural address from the steps of the US Capitol. In the past the President has tended towards talks of considerable duration. History suggests he should instead seek out a text shorter in length and longer in principle.

The two most memorable inaugural speeches, by wide acclaim, were provided by Abraham Lincoln and John Kennedy. Both were brief. Lincoln had already mastered this art form. His 272-word address at Gettysburg far eclipsed the two-hour effort from Edward Everett that preceded him. In 1865 he took the oath of office and offered a mere 703 words to his assembled audience. But in that limited space his strategy towards the shattered South — "with malice towards none, with charity for all" — was outlined with the utmost precision. Lincoln's magnanimity for those who had opposed him in the Civil War, and passionate desire to "achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace", shone through with every sentence. Kennedy could not be quite so concise. Nonetheless, his 1,300 words in 1961 were the shortest formal oration of this century. This first inaugural to be witnessed by millions worldwide via television established his reputation as a public speaker. Like Lincoln he chose one theme alone and stuck with it. For Kennedy it was the responsibility of his generation to prosecute the Cold War. To "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship" in order to "assure the survival and success of liberty".

Politicians are rarely so terse by choice. In each case there was an accidental element. The Washington to which Lincoln spoke was known to be awash with Southern spies and sympathisers. A prolonged monologue by the President was thought impolitic. That sentiment was well-founded. Forty-one days

after his plea for reconciliation, Lincoln was slain in the city by John Wilkes Booth. With his demise went what limited hope remained for harmonious reconstruction.

Kennedy rewrote his remarks right up to the day of delivery. Uninspired by initial drafts he dropped policy detail after detail. The freezing temperatures of that winter ultimately forced his hand. Fearful for the health of Robert Frost, whom he had invited to read his poem *The Gift Outright*, Kennedy made the final cuts.

Mr Clinton might consider all this before standing before his countrymen. The best course, not only to ensure a well-received speech but for his second term, would identify that one aspect that he would like to be remembered for and keep that as his focus. In his early tenure the President frequently tried to change too much on too many fronts. If the next four years are to produce more progress, then a different tack has to be taken. Priorities must be picked and followed consistently. If that can be properly presented in the minimum of paragraphs, so much the better.

If the White House has been sold opposite advice it might consider the fate of William Harrison. On the coldest inauguration day since records began he spoke for 100 minutes. Not surprisingly he caught a chill which quickly turned to pneumonia. Harrison died 31 days after assuming office.

Mr Clinton is unlikely to suffer Harrison's fate. But he will want to emulate those more illustrious figures. Lincoln and Kennedy exploited this ceremonial event to define their political objectives. If this President could match that even in a modest way he would be well served. The time is not to ask what Americans can do for him, but what he can now do for Americans.

A BROTHER'S HAND

The Chief Rabbi is right to attend the Gryn memorial

In the Hebrew Bible, there is no more poignant passage than that in which Jacob is reconciled with his estranged brother Esau. The news of Esau's imminent arrival with 400 men terrifies Jacob. Esau's envy and hatred of his younger brother, destined to greatness, had caused their mother to send Jacob away for his own safety. Jacob entreats God: "Deliver me. I pray thee, from the hand of my brother Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." But when the brothers meet, they embrace and weep, and Jacob offers all that he possesses, "for therefore," he declares, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me."

The Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, will perhaps take heart from the story of Jacob and Esau when he contemplates the all too public conflict which has divided British Jewry ever since the death of the distinguished progressive rabbi Hugo Gryn. Dr Sacks, the leader of the Orthodox community which embraces the majority of affiliated Jews in Britain, did not take part in Rabbi Gryn's funeral service last year, and was promptly criticised by members of the Reform movement. Now Dr Sacks has agreed to attend the secular memorial gathering for Rabbi Gryn and has come under fire from the conservative wing of his own United Synagogue, whose organ, the *Jewish Tribune*, has accused him of aiding Reform Judaism's "quest for recognition".

The Chief Rabbi replies that the memorial meeting will take place under the auspices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Council of Christians and Jews, of which he is president and which Rabbi Gryn

strongly supported. Although this dispute may appear obscure and unedifying to Jews and gentiles alike, it raises profound and unavoidable questions. Orthodox, Reform and Liberal Jews do not agree on the interpretation of God's law, and none of them takes theological differences lightly. The history of rabbinical Judaism is one of dialectical exegesis. God's purposes only become clear through debate; and sometimes honest and learned scholars will disagree. A small minority of Orthodox Jews rejects dialogue with other Jewish denominations, and for that matter other faiths, as conferring legitimacy on heresy and idolatry. But Dr Sacks surely represents the vast majority of his community in this unostentatious tribute to a man whose endurance in Auschwitz bore eloquent witness to Jewish survival. In life, they shared in commemorating the Holocaust; it would be absurd for that partnership of common humanity to be sundered in death.

If the story of Jacob and Esau teaches us anything, it is that reconciliation is always possible between brothers; far more unites the Jews of this country than divides them. The great enemy of reconciliation is not hatred, but fear. The historian Bernard Wasserstein has warned of "the withering away of Judaism as a spiritual presence in the lives of most Jews in Europe". Some Orthodox Jews react to this danger by retreating into a spiritual ghetto. By reaching out to other members of the extended Jewish family, the Chief Rabbi has shown that he, at least, is ready to face European Judaism's greatest challenge. Before Jacob was reconciled with Esau, he had first to wrestle with the angel.

Heath rebuts charges of misleading public on Europe

From Sir Edward Heath, MP for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Conservative)

Sir, It is a pity that Lord Beloff, formerly Professor of Government and Public Administration at Oxford, did not address himself to the historical facts in his letter of January 15 (printed under the false heading "Britain's goals on joining Market") rather than indulging in suppositional fantasies which bear no relationship to the political and economic facts of life.

Britain never did set out to join "a market". We negotiated with three communities, the Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community and the Atomic Energy Agency, each of which was far broader and deeper from the outset than a market. Together they have now become the European Union.

I opened negotiations with the Six in Paris in October 1962 with an application for membership of the Treaty of Rome, the introductory paragraph of which runs "determined to establish the foundations of an ever closer union among the European peoples".

I stated: "In saying that we wish to join the EEC, we mean that we desire to become full, wholehearted and active members of the European Community in its widest sense and to go forward with you in the building of a new Europe."

In my conclusion I said: "We in the United Kingdom will regard the successful conclusion of these negotiations as a point of departure, not as the end of the road." This speech was published in full and circulated by the Government as a White Paper.

In my speech to the Ministers of Western European Union in April

1962 I stated: "... you yourselves have decided that those who want to join the Economic Communities as full members must also join the Political Union. I am sure that this was the right decision. If this European Union is going to achieve the great things which we confidently expect of it then, in our view, it must be political as well as economic. As members we should want to strengthen its political development." This was also published as a White Paper.

The negotiations lasted for 16 months. At each stage I reported to the press in Brussels and at the airports, followed by a full statement to the House of Commons, accompanied by questions. There were spaced out by full debates. All of this received immense publicity in the press, on radio and television. There can, therefore, be no justification for anyone to claim that they were not given the fullest information.

After my Government reached agreement with the Six in 1970 the results were published in full in a White Paper which was soon widely read, and the shorter version of which was delivered to every household. The consequent debate in the House of Commons lasted for six full days. My party had a free vote at the end and 69 Labour members refused to observe their three-line whip and our majority in the debate was 112.

My last words in winding up the debate were "... tonight when this House endorses this Motion many millions of people right across the world will rejoice that we have taken our rightful place in a truly United Europe."

The referendum vote organised

three years later by the Labour Government supported what we had done with a massive two-to-one majority. Why then should Lord Beloff bother us with his suppositions? The structure of the Union is *sui generis*. There has been nothing like it before and it will develop its union further in its own way. We make a contribution to it when we choose to do so, as one of the four major powers in it.

There is no sense in complaining of "laws from outside our borders" when our political leaders will have played a full part in the making of them; nor should we be indignant at only having one representative on the European Court of Justice, which is the same as we have on all other international courts outside the Union.

Lord Beloff also appears to be suffering from selective loss of memory when he winds up by writing that "policies dreamed up elsewhere could ruin the livelihoods of many of your fellow citizens". Surely he must have heard the present Government declaring that, after over 20 years in the Community, Britain has the best employment record in the Union?

It is Lord Beloff, unfortunately like so many others in Britain today, who is suffering the inferiority complex which makes him want to get out of the Union. Those of us who worked for our membership and continue to support it have complete confidence that we can fully play one of the leading parts in the ever closer union of the future.

Yours sincerely,
EDWARD HEATH.
House of Commons.
January 16.

Definition of new bugging powers in the Police Bill

From the Chairman of the Bar Council and others

Sir, Michael Howard (letter, January 10) asserts that the Police Bill strikes the right balance between giving law-enforcement agencies the ability to use up-to-date technology and providing effective safeguards against abuse (see letters, January 8, 14). It does not.

The Bill extends police powers to eavesdrop on the private conversations of anyone who speaks to a lawyer, journalist or doctor. They do not have to be the subject of, or even connected to, an investigation.

The Police Bill would allow the police covertly to enter, search and place listening devices in the offices of lawyers, doctors and journalists. The Bill undermines clients' right to confidential communication with their lawyers, and has no provision protecting confidential communications held with journalists, health professionals and others. The Bill does not even require the police to obtain judicial authorisation before these powers can be used.

The Home Secretary argues that there will be a new avenue for redress for complaints, to a commissioner, but obviously in most cases the individual will not be aware that there has been covert surveillance. Where surveillance is discovered the commissioner can only consider a complaint on narrow judicial-review grounds and will not be able to give reasons for any decision. The Bill also prevents the commissioner's decisions being questioned in court.

We welcome the amendments to the Bill tabled by the Labour Party (report, January 17), which broadly meet our concerns. Those proposed by the Government do not.

We hope that these serious defects in the Police Bill can be remedied dur-

ing report stage in the House of Lords on January 20. Failure to do so will have profound implications for us all.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT OWEN
Chairman, Bar Council.
TONY GIRLING
(President, Law Society).
JOHN WADHAM
(Director, Liberty).
c/o Liberty,
21 Tabard Street, SE1.
January 17.

From the Chief Constable of Staffordshire Police

Sir, I find the statement in your leader of January 14, "A Bill too far", that my colleagues and I "are bound to be less sensitive to the rights of the individual than a judge" to be little short of offensive. I, for one, welcome the safeguard of independent scrutiny by a commissioner and, as at present, by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Matters of such seriousness do not pass "under my nose".

Incidentally, the inference in your article that evidence obtained by intrusive surveillance may not, under the present law, be used in court is incorrect. I know of at least five of my colleagues who have given evidence of this nature which has been accepted by the judge.

For my part, I follow the guidelines on evidence rigorously. Knowing the decision may be scrutinised in court. Furthermore, I have operational command of this force and believe this to be very much an operational matter, for which I can be held accountable.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN GIFFARD,
Chief Constable, Staffordshire Police,
Staffordshire Police Headquarters,
Cannock Road, Stafford.

From Sir James Sharples, Chief Constable of Merseyside Police

Sir, Lord Alexander ("A Bill that subverts the rule of law", January 10) gives a misleading and inaccurate assessment of the proposals under Clauses 91-97 of the Police Bill.

No one doubts the very genuine concerns of those who rightly wish to see in place procedures that recognise and defend the civil liberty of our citizens. There clearly needs to be a balance between the powers of the State to combat serious crime and individual freedoms through a proper and accountable system. In my view the Bill achieves such an aim.

Lord Alexander broadly dismisses the role of the commissioner, which is a vital and necessary safeguard, perhaps to support his misleading contention that the "police are to be judges in their own cause". Nothing could be further from the truth.

Lord Alexander, a former chairman of the Bar Council, clearly has little experience or understanding of the practical considerations surrounding the use of police tactics and of the need for the Police Service to act decisively and expeditiously against those responsible for increasing and disturbing levels of serious crime. He admits that "wide powers may in some cases be necessary" to fight this battle. Experience has shown over many years that these powers are vital and that any changes to current proposals will cause serious damage to our capacity to combat serious crime.

Yours faithfully,
JIM SHARPLES,
Chief Constable, Merseyside Police
(President, Association of Chief Police Officers, 1995-96).
Merseyside Police,
PO Box 59, Liverpool L69 1JD.
January 17.

From law to pulpit

From Mrs Breda Smith

Sir, What a joy to read the article on William Agley ("From the law to the pulpit", January 13).

So often nowadays we hear the bad news from the Roman Catholic Church. It was so good to read of a young man who has changed career and gone into the priesthood with his eyes and mind open.

I pray that he will continue to be open about difficulties he will face, in particular the issue of celibacy. I hope he will continue to find emotional support from his non-sexual friendships.

William, be assured of a place in my prayers.

Yours sincerely,
BREDA SMITH,
15 Farm End,
Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire.
January 15.

Undercover message?

From Mrs Beryl Wakefield

Sir, My daughters and I have noticed an annoying feature on our recent purchases of Marks & Spencer briefs. For countless years the labels have been stitched into the right-hand seam — a quick guide when dressing in a hurry. But last summer the labels moved to the left.

With an election pending, is this a subtle hint to thousands of British women?

Yours etc,
BERYL WAKEFIELD,
56 Widdow Road,
Lichfield, Staffordshire.

Weekend Money letters, page 41

In the steps of Todd

From Dr D. H. Marrian

Sir, As a "Toddler" myself, I enjoyed Dr Sharp's letter (January 16) about the late Lord Todd.

I also recall that, in 1962, The Chemical Society set a Christmas competition to compose a Chemist's Prayer along the lines of the Fisherman's Prayer. Alex, who had been a fisherman, was amused to read one of the entries:

Lord give me leave to build a lab
So large that when I've trod
Its vases naives and aisles I'll think
I'm in thy house — Oh Todd!

Yours etc,
DENIS MARRIAN,
Trinity College, Cambridge.
January 16.

Author defends an unbiased 'Eagle'

From Mr Jack Higgins

Sir, Your excellent report on the German war with Hollywood (January 14) unfairly includes my novel, *The Eagle Has Landed*, among your examples of portrayals of the typical "Hollywood Nazi".

Eagle went completely against the trend in war novels in its approach. When my publisher asked me what it was going to be about I told him that German paratroopers disguised as a Polish squad in the SAS were to parachute in to kidnap Winston Churchill, who was spending a quiet weekend in Norfolk.

My publisher told me it was the worst idea he had ever heard of: how can you have a bunch of Nazis trying to get Churchill? You've no heroes. The public will never go for it. He then put the phone down.

The point was that, based on my own experiences on security duties on the East German border where, owing to lack of troops, we had to employ many German veterans of the Second World War, I realised that only a minority of Germans had been members of the Nazi Party and that millions had simply been called up, just like us, to fight for their country with no option. In other words my novel was about good men fighting for a rotten cause.

The results were exceptional: a novel published in 58 languages, republished in Moscow and Peking again last year, 26 million copies all told. Interestingly enough, I have also received over the years many letters from both Germans and those of German extraction, saying thanks for showing that it was possible for a German soldier to be both decent and honourable.

May I add that the enduring, possibly unique, success of the film on TV around the world speaks for itself.

Yours faithfully,
JACK HIGGINS,
Septembertide,
Mont de la Roque,
St Aubin, Jersey, CI.
January 14.

Chester Cathedral

From Mr John Makinson

Sir, Your report (News in brief, January 13) might suggest that the replacement of the nave floor in Chester Cathedral is an act of vandalism. Far from it. Quite simply, the floor is worn out. It has been patched and repaired — frequently in concrete — to such an extent that further partial repair is no longer sensible.

Much as the Dean and Chapter, and the Fabric Committee, respect the aims of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the cathedral is not a deserted monument, but an active centre of worship. The floor must be made even and safe for the many worshippers and visitors, about a million last year.

As for the heating, congregations in the 21st century will expect a warm church — and if Mr Gavin Stamp had sat through a service during the past fortnight, even he might have wished for it.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN MAKINSON
(Secretary,
Cathedral Fabric Committee).
8 Lache Lane, Chester.
January 14.

Bide-a-wee

From Mrs Stephen Morse

Sir, Your report (January 14) that the proposed retirement home for pets to be built in New York is "believed to be the first of its kind in the world".

For many years there has been, on the outskirts of The Hague a "tehuis voor bejaarde dieren" — in other words, a "home for elderly animals". I do not suppose it is so lavishly equipped as the one in New York. Promises to be, but I am certain that the animals there receive plenty of tender loving care — which is probably more important to them.

Yours faithfully,
LORNA MORSE,
16 Bateman Mews, Cambridge.
January 14.

Winning colours

From Mr Alan Shuback

Sir, Instead of changing their kit every few years, the England football team (report, January 13) might take a hint from baseball's New York Yankees, who have retained their identity as well as their winning style without ever having reverted to uniform changes in search of new revenue.

The ubiquitous Yankee cap, surely the single most popular item of sporting gear in the world, has remained unchanged for nearly 80 years. Moreover, the Yankee uniform — white, with navy-blue pinstripes and a navy "NY" logo over the heart — is virtually the same as Babe Ruth wore in 1923, the year the Yankees first won the World Series.

Since that date the Yankees have won the World Series 23 times, while England, with its ever-changing kit, have managed just a single World Cup title.

Respectfully yours,
ALAN SHUBACK,
313 West 75th Street,
New York, NY 10023.
January 15.

REGINALD MITCHELL

... I was privileged to meet our servicemen and women in the past week. Their professional standing, their confidence and their courage undoubtedly are a proud of them — very proud of them has Britain's support, and the prayers for their safe return home. Prayers are also for you, their families, no less proud of you, and God bless."

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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

LVMH sells £560m of shares in Guinness

GUINNESS, the drinks company, yesterday paid out £182 million in a share buy-back as it attempted to ease the pain caused by the decision of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the company's principle shareholder, to reduce its stake from 20.9 per cent to 14.2 per cent.

Guinness stepped into the market to purchase 44 million shares at 414p from Goldman Sachs after the French luxury goods and drinks company announced that it had placed 135 million shares with the merchant bank at the same price.

The move, which is standard City practice, helped to steady Guinness's share price after shares fell 22p to 414p in early trading. By close the shares had rebounded to 432p, down just 4p on the day.

Ten years ago Guinness was accused of illegally propping up its share price in an attempt to underpin a £2.7 billion bid for United Distillers, the spirits company. Four people, including Ernest Saunders, the former chairman, were subsequently found guilty of fraud in connection with the share support operations.

LVMH, which informed Guinness of its decision to sell on Thursday evening, is believed to have made a profit of about £100 million from the sale of the stake, which raised a total of £560 million.

Steele goes as Storehouse finance director

STOREHOUSE, the Bhs and Mothercare group, that has recently come under fire for its financial reporting, is to part company with Dick Steele, its finance director for the past three years.

Criticism has centred on the company's "same-store" sales figures. Storehouse reported its latest figures yesterday, showing an 18 per cent rise in group sales for the six weeks to Christmas Eve, and same business sales up 9 per cent. The news prompted a 17½p rise to 275p in Storehouse's share price, which has fallen heavily over the past nine months.



Dick Steele is leaving Storehouse, which has been criticised for its financial reporting

BUSINESS TODAY

FTSE 100	4207.7	(+10.2)
Yield	3.70%	
FTSE All Share	2511.07	(+5.81)
Nikkei	19090.04	(-64.30)
New York	6796.85	(+38.45)*
Dow Jones	773.86	(+4.11)*
S&P Composite		
Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	6 5/8%	(6 5/8%)
Yield	6.53%	(6.53%)
3-mth Interbank	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Libor 6m	111	(110 1/4)
London		
New York	1.6700*	(1.6750)
Dollar	1.6680	(1.6752)
DM	2.6878	(2.6878)
FF	9.0819	(9.0827)
Sfr	2.3246	(2.3040)
Yen	165.37	(165.08)
S Index	96.6	(96.1)
Tokyo close Yen	115.53	
London		
DM	1.5120*	(1.5050)
FF	5.4385*	(5.3785)
Sfr	1.3940*	(1.3787)
Yen	177.08*	(175.52)
S Index	98.8	(98.1)
Tokyo close Yen	115.53	
Brnt 15-day (Apr)	\$22.45	(n/a)
London close	\$35.15	(\$35.25)

* denotes midday trading price

Comet to make 1,200 redundant

MORE than 1,200 jobs are to go at Comet, the electrical retail group, as part of a major reorganisation after the acquisition of the Norweb retail chain last year.

Kingfisher, Comet's parent company, which bought the Norweb business for £29 million three months ago, yesterday named 54 stores that it plans to close.

Comet said the cuts were just the first stage of its plan to integrate the two store groups. It is taking its redundancy costs from a £22 million budget to cover the operation.

While all of the job losses are coming from Norweb's staff, Comet is closing 26 of its own stores and moving staff to other branches. Some 28 Norweb stores are being closed, and the remaining 26 Norweb stores are to reopen as Comet, which inherited 138 Norweb stores when it was merged, said it would complete the reorganisation with 250 stores, compared with the

Electra Fleming sued over HMSO

ELECTRA FLEMING, the venture capitalist that led last year's successful bid for HMSO, the privatised government stationer and printer, is being sued for more than £500,000.

Michael Allen, of MA Media Partners, claims his company is owed £543,437.50 after it introduced Electra Fleming to Rupert Penant-Rea, former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, last April.

Mr Penant-Rea and Electra Fleming went on to form the National Publishing Group (NPG) that won control of HMSO. Now renamed the Stationery Office, at the end of September with a controversially low bid of £54 million. The sale is under investigation by the National Audit Office.

MA Media and Electra Fleming agreed an introduction fee of 1 per cent of the first £20 million, and 0.25 per cent of the remaining total consideration price.

Cable job
Cable and Wireless, the telecoms group, yesterday appointed a senior Granada director as chief executive of its new cable company. The new company, formed from Mercury and three cable groups, will drop the Mercury name from its title.

PSBR up as VAT receipts decline

GOVERNMENT borrowing in December was higher than the City expected, partly because of weak VAT receipts as Britain's consumer revival lost some of its steam at the tail-end of last year.

The public sector borrowing requirement was £2.1 billion last month, compared with City expectations of a figure nearer to £1.1 billion. December's borrowing took the cumulative PSBR for the current tax year to £16.1 billion, compared with £23 billion at the same stage a year ago.

For the full year ending on April 5, the Government is forecasting a PSBR of £26.4 billion and, despite a measure of City disappointment in yesterday's figures, the Treasury said that they were entirely consistent with its forecast at Budget time.

Officials noted that borrowing in December was boosted by £1.2 billion because of shifts in the timing of interest payments related to the new market for gilt strips. These allow investors to split government bonds into paper of shorter maturities, which then attract interest payments in different months. December is one of the months most affected by this activity.

How far will rates fall in the credit card war?

Of slightly more concern in the markets was apparent weakness in VAT receipts, which have clearly slowed over the past two months. David Bloom of HSBC James Capel noted that, although VAT receipts in the first ten months of the financial year were 10 per cent higher than a year ago, this compared with a year-on-year rise of 15 per cent only two months ago.

Nevertheless, the City broadly agreed with the Treasury's view that it will meet this year's PSBR projection.

Officials noted that borrowing in December was boosted by £1.2 billion because of shifts in the timing of interest payments related to the new market for gilt strips. These allow investors to split government bonds into paper of shorter maturities, which then attract interest payments in different months. December is one of the months most affected by this activity.

Bank of Ireland Mortgages

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Bank of Ireland Mortgages

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Siemens may buy Parsons

By OLIVER ALGUST

SIEMENS, the German electronics group, could expand its £1.1 billion presence on Tyneside with the acquisition of Parsons from Rolls-Royce. But half of the 1,800 staff at the closure-threatened turbine-generator plant are still likely to lose their jobs.

Jürgen Gehrels, the Siemens chief executive, said: "We are always looking at business opportunities, especially those where we can strengthen the position of our individual businesses and areas where we could improve the service we provide to our customers. I don't know yet whether Parsons is such a business opportunity, but we are looking at it."

A four-strong team of executives spent three days at the plant last week. A Rolls-Royce spokesman said there were a number of potential purchasers, but he declined to name them.

An acquisition of Parsons by Siemens, now a leading electronics manufacturer in Britain with over 10,000 UK employees, would significantly boost the German company's presence on Tyneside. Last year it created 500 high-skill jobs at its nearby semiconductor plant, the most modern of its kind in Europe.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, the City's accident-prone investment house, has been rocked by the resignation of the high-flying "superwoman" Nicola Horlick, after allegations of staff poaching...

Business — The Sunday Times tomorrow

C&W picks Granada director as chief of new merged group

By ERIC REGULY

CABLE AND WIRELESS yesterday appointed a senior Granada executive as chief executive of Cable and Wireless Communications (CWC), the company to be formed by the merger of Mercury and three cable companies. It said the Mercury name would disappear from the group.

Graham Wallace, 48, a Granada director and chief executive of its restaurants division, is to join CWC in two weeks at an annual salary of £375,000, plus an undisclosed number of CWC options.

Dick Brown, chief executive

of C&W, which will own slightly more than half of CWC, was appointed CWC's chairman. A finance director has yet to be hired.

Mr Brown denied speculation that the highly complex merger of the Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron cable companies, each of which is publicly listed, and Mercury was running into potentially insurmountable obstacles. "We're still on schedule to complete the merger by the spring," he said.

CWC will offer cable TV, telephony and Internet services, long-distance services through Mercury, and intends to develop a range of interactive products. Mr Brown would not comment on speculation that CWC is preparing to offer digital TV services, with as many as 200 channels, in competition with BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster 40 per cent owned by News International, owner of The Times.

However, analysts expect the entire cable industry to launch digital channels late this year. The three cable companies will give CWC 700,000 customers and access to another

five million. Mr Brown said that CWC will also offer mobile-phone services, though it is not known whether this will be done directly through One-2-One, which is owned equally by C&W and US West, the American regional phone company that owns 27 per cent of TeleWest, Britain's biggest cable company.

Mr Brown has hinted that One-2-One will eventually be absorbed into CWC. But Gary Arnes, chief executive of US West International, said that it has no plans to relinquish joint control of One-2-One.

Mr Wallace, an engineer and accountant by training, joined Granada in 1986 and was later involved in the merger of BSB and Sky to form BSkyB. In 1992 he became chief executive of Granada's restaurants business. He took over the restaurants divisions in 1995 and oversaw their merger with the Forte catering business last year.

At Granada, Mr Wallace is to be replaced by Don Davenport, who had been responsible for contract catering, roadside restaurants and motorway operations.

Wray tables higher bid for Forest

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE battle to win control of Nottingham Forest Football Club took a new twist yesterday when Bridgford, the consortium led by Nigel Wray, raised its offer by £5 million.

Bridgford is offering a cash injection of £15 million, while Forest shareholders have the option of a 10 per cent stake in the new company or £1.7 million cash. The company also tabled a second offer which includes £13 million in new cash and a 30 per cent stake for existing shareholders.

Bridgford, which is also backed by Irving Scholar — the former Tottenham Hotspur chairman — is one of three consortiums competing to win the support of the club's 20th shareholders.

Last week Forest shareholders rejected a bid from a consortium led by Sandy Anderson, former head of Potterbrook. A third consortium led by Albert Scardino, husband of Marjorie Scardino, Pearson's new chief executive, has yet to make a formal offer.



Simon Bentley with camping equipment from Blacks Leisure, whose sales have leapt

Blacks Leisure strides out

SHARES in Blacks Leisure, which rose by an extraordinary 680 per cent in 1996, jumped again yesterday after the leisure wear retailer and distributor reported a strong rise in sales and profit margins (Martin Barrow writes).

The company said that total sales rose were 45 per cent higher in the 44 weeks to

January 4, while sales on a like-for-like basis were up 22 per cent.

Retail operations, consisting of the First Sport and Blacks Outdoor chains, enjoyed a 22 per cent rise in like-for-like sales. Simon Bentley, the chairman and chief executive, said that the new ActiveVenture format traded

ahead of budget over Christmas.

In the first ten months of the current year, 28 stores were opened, giving Blacks 105 outlets. The company also said that distribution operations, embracing O'Neill and Filia UK, continued to trade well.

Blacks shares touched a new high of 406½p yesterday before easing back to 401½p, a gain of 16½p. A year ago, the shares were worth 49½p.

Analysts yesterday upgraded pre-tax profit forecasts for the current year to February 28 to about £10 million, from forecasts of £9.25 million. The company earned just £2.1 million in the previous 12 months.

Mis-selling fear over bonds risk

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

BUSINESS figures released by Scottish Mutual yesterday reveal it could be vulnerable to mis-selling accusations over its high income bonds.

The company sold £221 million, nearly a quarter of last year's new business, into a high income bond guaranteeing 10.5 per cent annual income and capital security if neither the FT-SE 100 or S&P 500 indices fall over five years.

The Institute of Actuaries criticised the marketing of such products last month for misleading investors into thinking there is no risk of indices falling when it estimates the risk at 20 per cent.

There are fears that the Scottish insurer, a wholly owned subsidiary of Abbey National, could put its reputation at risk if such products do not deliver according to investors' expectations. One analyst said: "If the wording in their literature is inadequate or the product does not perform, they will either have to pay up or be open to charges of mis-selling — of course, they are not alone in that risk."

Graham Pottinger, Scottish Mutual's chief executive, said: "We have looked at all our marketing and are confident that it is clear to investors that their capital could be at risk." But he added that the risk had not been quantified.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Liberty unleashing pensions price war

A PRICE WAR is looming in the personal pensions market as Liberty International prepares to launch a low-cost pension to rival those offered by Virgin and Eagle Star. The new pension, available from Tuesday, will be sold by telephone only and will have a small management fee of about 1 per cent, plus an additional monthly charge.

Liberty intends to offer a group personal pension product later this year. Marc Hommel, director of Liberty International Pensions, said that its salesforce was not paid on a commission basis and was not under pressure to do "a hard sell". Liberty International, which also owns Capital Shopping Centres, intends to start selling pensions in its out-of-town malls later this year. Virgin entered the personal pensions market in November, saying that consumers mistrusted the life insurance industry and claiming that its simple products with transparent charges would revolutionise the market.

Low-cost pensions in pipeline, page 31

Northern changes start

THE first changes at Northern Electric since the regional electricity company went into the control of CE Electric began yesterday with the announced sale of its stake in a combined heat and power services company. Northern Electric said that the sale of the one-third interest was expected to be completed within a month to an industrial buyer. Meanwhile boardroom changes are awaited after CE Electric, which won Northern in a hostile bid, moved in a set of directors this month.

EU jobless rate steady

THE European Union's average seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was unchanged at 10.9 per cent for the seventh consecutive month in November, representing 18.2 million jobless. The unemployment rate was 10.8 per cent in November 1995. The EU rate is double the US rate of 5.4 per cent and three times Japan's 3.4 per cent rate. Of the 15 EU nations, Britain recorded the largest fall over the month, down 0.4 percentage points from October to 7.5 per cent. Spain had the highest rate (22.3 per cent) and Luxembourg the lowest (3.3 per cent).

Airbus partner deal

AIRBUS, the consortium that includes British Aerospace, yesterday signed up Fokker Aviation of The Netherlands and Belair of Belgium as design partners in a bid to revive the flagging fortunes of the A330, the planned 550-seat superjumbo. Boeing, the world's leading planemaker, is already marketing an enlarged version of the 747. Airbus said that it is negotiating with other aerospace companies worldwide with the aim of placing up to 40 per cent of the A330 work content with new partners.

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia	2.34	France	1.00	Italy	1.00
Austria	2.34	Germany	1.00	Japan	1.00
Belgium	2.34	Greece	1.00	Netherlands	1.00
Canada	2.34	Ireland	1.00	New Zealand	1.00
Czech	2.34	Italy	1.00	Norway	1.00
Cyprus	2.34	Japan	1.00	Portugal	1.00
Denmark	2.34	Netherlands	1.00	Spain	1.00
Finland	2.34	New Zealand	1.00	Sweden	1.00
France	1.00	Norway	1.00	Switzerland	1.00
Germany	1.00	Portugal	1.00	Turkey	1.00
Greece	1.00	Spain	1.00	USA	1.00
Hungary	1.00	Sweden	1.00	UK	1.00
Ireland	1.00	Switzerland	1.00		
Italy	1.00	Turkey	1.00		
Japan	1.00	USA	1.00		
Netherlands	1.00	UK	1.00		
New Zealand	1.00				
Norway	1.00				
Portugal	1.00				
Spain	1.00				
Sweden	1.00				
Switzerland	1.00				
Turkey	1.00				
USA	1.00				
UK	1.00				

THE BIG FREEZE

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THE TIMES SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

A WORKING WEEK FOR: TONY MASON

Majestic lifestyle based on a nose for a deal

Paul Durman meets a man at the heart of a wine warehouse operation, whose buying decisions hold the key to commercial success

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

THERE can be few businessmen who can tell you with conviction: "Quality control is always exciting." Yet this is what Tony Mason says, and there is little reason to doubt him.

Mason is in charge of purchasing for Majestic Wine, the company that sells a million cases of wine a year to middle-class professionals. His is the key role in deciding what wines will be available in the converted petrol stations, churches and other oddities that comprise Majestic's warehouse stores.

The wine must first pass through Majestic's headquarters in Walsford to be quality tested by Mason and his team. "We taste a bottle of everything as it arrives to make sure it's up to scratch," he explains. "That's always a nice moment in the afternoon when we taste the day's delivery. We bring in competitors' ranges and taste those, too. Those are always fun and interesting." It's a tough job but someone has to do it.

Mason, 51, the company's trading director, is the heart of Majestic, which next week releases its first results since it listed on the Alternative Investment Market. He was a founder of the company in 1981, and has been involved with wine warehouses ever since — though not always with Majestic, and not always with the success that the company enjoys at present. He is renowned for his deal-making, and is always on the lookout for interesting "parcels" of wine.

Debbie Worton, marketing director of Majestic, says: "He's a bit like a truffle hound when he gets the scent. You never know quite what he's going to come up with next."

A classic example came last year when he picked up 47,000 cases of wine for a knockdown £650,000, or 30p a bottle from Sweden of all places. Mason jumped on a plane to take advantage of a liquidation of stock by Sweden's state liquor board. Majestic's Swedish promotion was a great success.

Mason's trading flair is built on an entire career spent in the wine business. He came into the industry by chance when, on leaving school in 1962, he went to work for Ferguson & Mason, bottling and labelling wines by hand in the huge cellar Fortnum's then owned under Piccadilly. He readily acknowledges that his initial enthusiasm was "more about being 17 and working in Soho in 1962".

Mason went on to learn about retailing, working for the men he regards as the two great wine merchants of their time — the mercurial Ahmed Pochee, who founded Oddbins, and Brian Barnett, the founder of Augustus Barnett.

The allure of wine has helped Majestic to make a sparkling stock market debut. Its shares, placed at 160p in November, have quickly risen to 285p. City presen-

tations attracted much more interest than larger but duller companies.

Mason dispels romantic notions that his job is all about driving through the French countryside, occasionally stopping off to share a leisurely bottle with local farmers. Much of the business is conducted at trade fairs. Trips to the vineyards are tightly scheduled, with six or eight visits squeezed in each day over a three or four-day visit.

"We spend 15 minutes talking to you and taste all the wines you have available. We don't socialise or fraternise. We taste and say, 'That wine and that wine, I like. Send me a sample and your best price.' We never, never commit to purchase abroad because it tastes totally different from what it does in the tasting office."

Mason and his team each make 12 buying trips a year. Purchasing has to dovetail with Majestic's regular promotions, seven each year.

Mason insists that every wine is tasted with the price chalked clearly on the bottle. He says the best wine buyers come from the sales side since they have a clear feel for what customers want to buy. The danger to avoid is buyers buying for their own more educated palates.

Mason's own specialities are the classic French appellations of the Loire Valley, Rhône and Burgundy; he has handled over responsibility for Bordeaux to a younger colleague. He says he is too old to buy New World wines from Australia, California or South Africa. Despite their popularity, Mr Mason remains suspicious.

"I don't particularly enjoy the very obvious fruity flavours of New World wine. They're nice to drink on their own, but they don't work with food." He adds: "It's that element in wine, a claret which you might find quite difficult — the dryness, the astringency — which, actually, if you're drinking claret with roast lamb, is terribly, terribly important."

After 34 years in the wine business, he is much more attracted to the complexities of Bordeaux. He adds: "That's what happens with the consumer, actually. If you're drinking Australian Shiraz now, you'll be enjoying claret in 20 years' time in a way you wouldn't enjoy it now."

He believes his tastes are in tune with Majestic's customers, who spend an average of more than £4.50 a bottle — which means there are thousands of cases of wine going out at £9.99. Indeed, Majestic's most successful product at Christmas was a Bize-Leroy Royal Burgundy at £9.99.

Straightforward and unassuming, Mason remains some way from being a wine snob. His staff say that the greatest accolade he can pay a wine is: "That will be really good with sausages." He says he is interested in other people's reactions, and likes to try out Majestic's wines on his family, including his two daughters, both in their late 20s. Gallingingly, his mother continues to insist that the only place to



Tony Mason, Majestic's trading director. His staff say that the greatest accolade he can pay a wine is: "That will be really good with sausages."

buy wine is Sainsbury's. "She's quite good for me," he grins.

His home in St Albans betrays another of his passions — steam trains. He even has a narrow-gauge train, such as you might see in an amusement park, in his hallway. He is also a passionate Frank Sinatra fan and a keen walker.

Mason first became involved with warehouse selling in the late 1970s when he was working for North West Vintners, the company that held the liquor concession for Kwik Save. North West Vintners had a warehouse in Hampstead, but the wines, based around the Kwik Save product range, were not right.

Working as his own buyer, Mason tried again when he moved on to Majestic Vintners in 1980. Although the firm succumbed to losses sustained on its fine-wine brokering activities the following year, Mason was convinced he could make warehouses work. When Giles Clarke and Esme Johnstone bought Majestic from the receivers, Mason joined them as retail director.

He says the Battersea store was the first that really took off. "Battersea was being inhabited by people who worked in the City and the West End, the new yuppie class [who] were obviously going to be

sophisticated enough to be regular wine drinkers."

The basic formula has changed little in the intervening years, though Majestic's progress has been more chequered. The company embarked on an ill-fated Californian venture in the mid-1980s, prompting Mason to leave to set up Wizard Wine.

He failed to realise how sharply property prices had moved and was soon struggling, having started Wizard without enough money. He was rescued by one of his customers — John Apthorp, who ran the Bejam frozen food chain. Bejam bought

Wizard in 1987, but was itself taken over by Iceland shortly afterwards.

Apthorp bought Wizard back from Iceland, bringing Mason and Tim How, then Bejam's managing director, along to run it. In 1991, Wizard was able to buy Majestic, in trouble once again, for £2.5 million. Wizard soon rebranded its own stores as Majestic, and set about its expansion.

Mason admits that his trading strengths are not matched by his ability to run organisations. Still, with better luck and timing, he might already have made a lot of money from wine warehouses. But it is Apthorp who has scooped the lion's share of the rewards from Majestic. The Apthorp family's holding is currently worth more than £20 million. Mason's

holdings of shares and options promise him a comfortable retirement rather than significant wealth.

Mason expresses no regrets, and is delighted that Majestic is now a quoted company. "It's fabulous to give a value and a meaning to all the years of hard work," he says.

Salaries in the wine trade are modest — Mason is Majestic's second-highest paid director on £42,500 a year. The rewards lie elsewhere. "Buying and selling wine is a nice business, and it attracts nice people," he says. "I've got friends who earn six-figure salaries who work in the computer industry or in insurance businesses, and they think, 'God, it must be bloody wonderful'. Compared with what they have to do, I suppose it is."

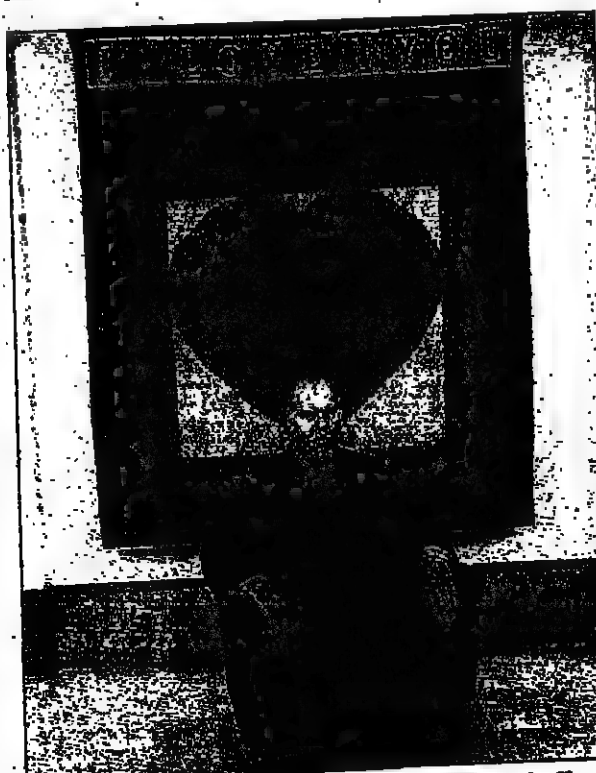
The gallery where art lovers can jet in for a flying visit

Joanna Pitman says BA's collection improves journeys from Heathrow

Imagine a modern gallery space, large, well lit, quiet and furnished with comfortable chairs and cafeterias, that is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and is guaranteed 1,000 wealthy visitors a day, 3,000 on peak days. Not a bad place to show your wares if you are an up-and-coming artist. In fact, the gallery has just opened, in Heathrow Terminal 4, in British Airways's business, first class and Concorde lounges.

And this is real art, not lamentable wallpaper art in non-contentious pastels, which you normally try to avoid looking at in airport lounges. BA has quietly gathered over the years an interesting collection of works by living British artists, which have been hidden in the chairman's office and in boardrooms and lounges, lost somewhere within the myriad of BA buildings scattered around Heathrow. The collection is a fine one, with works by Bridget Riley, Paul Huxley, John Hoyland, David Nash and Sean Scully, all recognised artists of the Seventies and Eighties whose delicate work has stood the harsh tests of time.

British Airways has now decided to excavate its collection, as it were, to retrieve it from boardrooms and offices and hang it where its most precious customers can see it — in the executive lounges. In addition, the company has borrowed a range of works by other contemporary artists, on loan from a number of London galleries and from the Royal College of Art. With



Peter Blake's *I Love You* has attracted several offers

the help of Artwise, the art consultancy, the company plans to open up all of its 180 lounges around the world to collections by living local artists.

The collections will be changed every six months so that executive travellers who are regular visitors to London will have the benefit of a living gallery that is constantly changing. Heathrow Terminal 4 lounges are

the first to be adapted as gallery space, currently with a selection of works dominated by Peter Blake, the associate artist of the National Gallery.

Within days of his tapes, paintings and prints being hung, travellers were asking whether they could buy them and take them, there and then. One pop tapestry entitled *I Love You* has attracted several offers

from businessmen, perhaps feeling guilty on their way home from a long business trip.

As yet they are not for sale, but intended for display and for the edification of BA passengers and staff. Guaranteed to gladden jet-lagged eyes is the clutch of wonderful jewel-like works from the brush of Howard Hodgkin — these have somehow escaped the eagle eye of the curator at the current Hayward Gallery show. There is a huge John Piper tapestry hanging over the entrance to the lounge, there are two substantial works by Dame Elisabeth Frink and two impressive prints by David Hockney. Eduardo Paolozzi is included, as is Paula Rego.

The works speak mainly of contentment and joy. Some are calm, some are boisterously lively. Many of the Blakes are finely detailed works and the current display includes elements of his well-known Alphabet. There are eight works by Eileen Cooper, on loan from the Jason Rhodes Gallery, all monumental in scale but also joyful lyrical pieces.

Of course, in every location the art has to appeal to as wide a range of international travellers as possible, and overtly political or religious themes must be avoided. To appeal to all and avoid being bland is not easy. But Artwise has managed to include plenty of tone and temper in its first hang. If you are a business class traveller, be sure to leave plenty of time before your flight to appreciate the show.

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COMMODITIES ICIS-LOR (London 6.00am) GNI LONDON GRAIN FUTURES

□ **NEW YORK:** A rally in high-tech shares and a stable bond market kept Wall Street steady. At midday, the Dow Jones industrial average was up 33.48 points at 6,798.85.

FALLS:
Forward Gp 150p (-15p)
Body Shop 178½p (-10p)
Dorling Kind 405p (-15p)
DFS Furniture 819p (-15p)
Enterprise 624p (-12p)

Closing Prices Page 45

But the company has vast discoveries, which it has yet to book in its balance sheet because it has yet to find a profitable use for the fuel. Unlike oil, gas is difficult to transport and without a com-

two days after the company issued a statement. But it moved quickly to defend the placement of the placed company, saying it was picking up the benefits of yesterday's deals. Guinness shares will only really take off when sales in its spirits division show signs of taking off.

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHED

Current price	Week's change
Bank of Scotland 334p	+37p .. Brokers' recommendation
Southampton Leisure 181p	+19p .. Returns from suspension
AIR 100 488p	+88p .. Bumper profits
Fenchurch Insurance 700	+42p .. Agrees merger terms
Premium Underwriting 167p	+17p .. Bid approaches
Lance Trust 514,820p	+23 .. Company listed by recent rise
Commercial Union 720 1/2p	+41 1/2p .. Speculative buying
Corporate Executive 24p	+1p .. Profit warning
Bicompassible 506p	+41 1/2p .. Renewed institutional buying

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	4100	4150	4200	4250	4300	4350
Calls						
Jan	120	54	6	0	0	0
Feb	130	107	100	30	20	0
Mar	157	142	111	67	41	20
Apr	129	110	88	65	47	20
May	116	—	159	105	100	—
Put						
Jan	11	0	0	0	0	0
Feb	22	24	25	72	110	195
Mar	47	41	92	105	135	173
Apr	58	23	103	120	155	190
May	—	—	—	—	—	—
London						
Jan	121	6	17	12	—	—
Feb	117	13	7	10	—	—
Mar	121	—	—	—	—	—
Apr	101	—	—	—	—	—
May	101	—	—	—	—	—
Term EMU 1994						
Jan	101	—	—	—	—	—
Feb	101	—	—	—	—	—
Mar	101	—	—	—	—	—
Apr	101	—	—	—	—	—
May	101	—	—	—	—	—
Terminals						
Jan	280	40	35	21	—	—
Feb	280	40	35	21	—	—
Mar	280	40	35	21	—	—
Apr	280	40	35	21	—	—
May	280	40	35	21	—	—
Yield 158k						
Jan	280	40	35	21	—	—
Feb	280	40	35	21	—	—
Mar	280	40	35	21	—	—
Apr	280	40	35	21	—	—
May	280	40	35	21	—	—
Spot Price						
Jan	280	40	35	21	—	—
Feb	280	40	35	21	—	—
Mar	280	40	35	21	—	—
Apr	280	40	35	21	—	—
May	280	40	35	21	—	—
Unit						
Jan	280	40	35	21	—	—
Feb	280	40	35	21	—	—
Mar	280	40	35	21	—	—
Apr	280	40	35	21	—	—
May	280	40	35	21	—	—

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol
FTSE 100						
Previous open interest: 6841	Mar 97	4199.0	4225.0	4195.0	4227.0	16,078
	Jun 97	4233.0	4255.0	4233.0	4251.0	1,941
FTSE 250						
Previous open interest: 5763	Mar 97	—	—	—	—	—
	Jun 97	—	—	—	4831.0	—
Three Month Sterling						
Previous open interest: 407339	Mar 97	93.58	93.62	93.57	93.61	131,514
	Jun 97	93.35	93.37	93.33	93.36	190,021
	Sep 97	93.11	93.14	93.08	93.15	1,941
Three Mth Euro Yen						
	Mar 97	98.41	98.41	98.41	98.41	—
	Sep 97	—	—	—	98.38	—
Three Mth Euro DM						
Previous open interest: 101761	Mar 97	96.82	96.83	96.81	96.85	15,992
	Jun 97	96.82	96.84	96.81	96.84	14,791
Long Gilt						
Previous open interest: 1,4990	Mar 97	110.21	110.48	110.16	110.40	11,991
	Jun 97	110.15	110.15	110.14	110.15	1,941
Japanese Govt Bond						
	Mar 97	125.75	125.81	125.63	125.66	163,101
	Jun 97	124.33	124.34	124.33	124.23	1,941
German Gov Bd Bund						
Previous open interest: 230178	Mar 97	101.51	101.58	101.25	101.36	129,795
	Jun 97	100.50	100.50	100.45	100.46	1,941
Three month ECU						
Previous open interest: 31,204	Mar 97	96.00	96.02	96.03	96.03	1,941
	Jun 97	96.00	96.01	96.05	96.01	944
Euro Swiss Franc						
Previous open interest: 41075	Mar 97	98.14	98.14	98.08	98.10	12,226
	Jun 97	98.00	98.00	98.05	98.08	29,918
Italian Govt Bond						
Previous open interest: 143375	Mar 97	130.65	131.03	131.25	131.22	47,900
	Jun 97	130.52	131.00	130.41	130.47	7,391

Base Rates Clearing Banks & Finance Hse's					
Discount Market Loans Origins Shirts:	Low 3% Weak Factors:				
Treasury Bills (Monthly):	2 mth 0 1/4%	3 mth 0 1/4%	6 mth 0 1/4%	9 mth 0 1/4%	12 mth 0 1/4%
Prime Bank Bills (Daily):	2 1/4-2 1/2%	2 1/4-2 1/2%	2 1/4-2 1/2%	2 1/4-2 1/2%	2 1/4-2 1/2%
Sterling Money Bills:	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%
Overnight:	open 3%, close 3 1/4%				
Local Authority Debts:		0 1/4%	0 1/4%	0 1/4%	0 1/4%
Building CDs:	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%
Savings CDs:	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%
Secured Society CDs:	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%	0 1/4-0 1/2%
TREASURY Bills:	Apples: 1.47mm allotted: £28.5m, received: 77% Lemons: 1.95-4.8m received: 61.147mm 15.940% last wk: 0.06027% net: 77% 2.20 m				

Currency	7 day	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	CaB
Dollar	5 1/4	5 1/8	5 1/8	5 1/8	5-6
Deutschmark	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3-4
French Franc	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	3-4
Swiss Franc	4 1/2	4 1/2	4 1/2	4 1/2	4-5
Yen	4 1/2	4 1/2	4 1/2	4 1/2	4-5

Bullion: Open \$354.90-354.00	Close: \$354.90-355.40	High: \$355.40-355.00
Low: \$353.45-353.05	AM: \$354.10	PM: \$355.75
Krugerrand: \$354.00-357.00 (£212.00-214.00)		
Platinum: \$940.25 (£215.25)	Silver: \$4.70 (£2.545)	Palladium: \$122.25 (£73.05)

Major Markets for January 1	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Amersterdam	3,009.5-3,011.0	3,010.5-3,010.0	+1/2	+2-2 1/2
Berlin	85,210.55-84.44	53,304.55-44.44	-17-12p	-41-30p
Copenhagen	10,210.1-12,445	10,235.10-12,445	+1/2	+1/2
Frankfurt	2,720.0-2,680.0	2,680.0-2,680.0	+1/2	+2-2p
London	260.99-260.96	267.13-267.96	+1/2	+1/2
Madrid	5,113.11-5,113.11	5,113.11-5,113.11	+1/2	+1/2
Milan	2,670.1-2,670.3	2,670.6-2,670.3	-23-20d	-40-60d
Netherlands	1,540.0-1,540.8	1,540.0-1,540.8	+1/2	+1/2
New York	1,667.0-1,769.0	1,667.0-1,769.0	0.11-0.12p	0.13-0.16p
Oslo	10,853.0-10,852	10,860.0-10,878	+1/2	+1/2
Paris	1,633.1-1,632.7	1,633.1-1,632.7	+1/2	+1/2
Stockholm	1,633.1-1,632.7	1,633.1-1,632.7	+1/2	+1/2
Zurich	194.98-194.98	194.98-194.98	+1/2	+2-2 1/2
Wien	1,633.1-1,632.7	1,633.1-1,632.7	+1/2	+1/2
Tokyo	2,331.00-2,330.9	2,332.5-2,330.5	+1/2	+2-2 1/2

[illegible]

OTHER STERLING	
Argentina peso*	1.6095-1.6732
Australia dollar	1.5399-2.1795
Bahrain dinar	0.626-0.638
Brazil real	12.7491-1.7504
Canada dollar	1.2141-1.2421
Cyprus pound	0.7390-0.805
Finland mark	7.925-8.04
French franc	1.6610-1.662
Hong Kong dollar	1.21016-12.9232
India rupee	97.71-160.67
Indonesia rupiah	1.660-1.661
Kuwait dinar KD	0.499-0.505
Malaysia ringgit	1.660-1.661
New Zealand dollar	1.6610-1.662
Pakistan rupee	1.660-1.661
Saudi Arabian riyal	2.0040-1.661
South African rand	1.660-1.661
S Africa rand (com)	7.791-7.893
US \$ 400thrm	0.90752-0.2168
Barclays Bank GTS = <i>London Bank</i>	

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

52	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
53	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
54	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
55	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
56	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
57	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
58	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
59	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
60	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
61	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
62	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
63	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
64	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
65	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
66	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
67	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
68	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
69	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
70	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
71	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
72	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
73	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
74	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
75	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
76	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
77	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
78	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
79	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%
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100	Alonso Long	64	34%	Trubshaw	31	31%



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Food stores safe in uncertain times

WEEKEND MONEY

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Woolwich savers left out in cold



THE TIMES PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Battle to win investors' votes



Gavin Lumsden and Anne Ashworth check out a new wave of Pep products being offered ahead of the election

While the Prime Minister ponders the most propitious date for the general election, the financial services industry is busy making money out of the political uncertainty. Legal & General and Lloyds have launched schemes this week that they claim will help investors to survive any decline in the market that could follow a Labour victory, or the vicissitudes of a hung Parliament. Insurance companies are also trying to anticipate pension reforms that could be passed by Labour, attempting to show that they can provide pensions at low cost (see below). As this election-inspired personal equity plan (Pep) and pension sales drive gets into full swing, investors seeking specific guidance on the election's impact on share values will be disappointed to learn that there is little consensus among analysts on the direction of the market if Tony Blair, the Labour leader, moves into No 10. Many maintain that a Labour victory has already been priced into the market and still expect shares to rise 10 per cent this year. Others believe that shares would start to fall only if Labour made a highly unpopular move after some months in office. Labour is making every effort to please private investors and City institutions alike ahead of the polls, without making any specific policy statements. The party has been making much of its desire to offer affordable pensions to the 11 million people currently not in occupational schemes. It also wants to encourage millions more to save with flexible independent savings accounts. This week Michael O'Brien, Labour City spokesman, restated his party's commitment to economic stability and low inflation, words intended to reassure those who remember the last time Labour was in power. But despite Mr O'Brien's soothing words, Legal & General expects that the index will tumble if his party gains power. More surprisingly, in a week when the index continued to hit new records, the company is also pessimistic about the market's chances, even if John Major is returned to power. L&G analysts believe that a hung Parliament would spell volatility, while a small Labour majority would mean in-fighting on the Labour front and back benches, also leading to market nervousness. A large majority for Mr Blair, says L&G, would knock share values because there would be fears of radical action. If Mr Major were to be re-elected, his party would continue to be plagued by dissent over Europe — also bad news for the index. For those alarmed by all these predictions, L&G's new General Election Pep offers a seemingly irresistible 140 per cent of the growth in the FT-SE 100 index of leading shares over five years, plus the return of the capital invested. L&G claims that its Pep minimises the risk of a market

fall because it will take the average level of the index in the first 12 months of the five-year period of the Pep as its starting point, and the last 12-month average as its ending point. Taking a 12-month average would normally halve the sum you could expect to receive. But L&G predicts that the market will fall this year and says that the average level and starting point could be below its present level, around 4,207. The lower the figure, it argues, the more potential for growth, without the exposure to large one-day falls. So if the FT-SE 100 rises to an average price of 6,400 in its last 12 months of the five-year period you would get 61.2 per cent return. When multiplied by the promised 140 per cent this gives a total return of 85.7 per cent. That may sound attractive, but the figures bear closer examination. Like all other "protected" schemes linked to the FT-SE 100, the election Pep relies solely on capital growth, which has averaged about 7.5 per cent a year since the 1920s, much less than the total return, which includes dividend income, of 11.9 per cent. No income is paid out. If the market does not fall this year, the effect of the averaging losses you six months' performance at each end of the term of the Pep. This means that overall you lose one year's potential growth, which means that the true term of the Pep is four years, not five. Over four years and multiplied by 140 per cent, the capital return works out at 42 per cent. Convert this back into an annual rate and the result is 7.1 per cent, slightly less than the average 7.5 per cent growth figure for the market. You might conclude that this middling return is not much compensation for having your money locked up for five years. You may also wonder why, if you are receiving no income, you should be investing in a Pep the principal attraction of which is the shelter it provides against income tax and capital gains tax. L&G has also extended the election idea to its pensions range, with a five-year Guaranteed Equity Fund. Here it could make sense if you are planning to retire soon and want to protect your gains to date. The new Safety First fund from the unit trust arm of Lloyds offers a fixed minimum price for your investment, protecting against sharp falls in share prices. The starting Safety price is 90.25p. A new price will be set each year if the market rises, but not at a lower level than the initial Safety price. Similar funds have been launched by Govett, NatWest and Edinburgh Fund Managers. If you are truly alarmed by the possible impact of a Labour victory on your wealth, you might be better off in a fund that does not lock you in for such a long period. You can take shelter for a while and venture out again if everything seems calm.

WEEKEND MONEY is edited by Anne Ashworth

Election shadow, page 36

Low-cost pensions in the pipeline

Labour has traditionally been regarded as the enemy of the personal pension, partly because it objects to the high fees deducted from premiums. As the party has no intention of relying only on the state pension, there is little chance of personal pensions being scrapped altogether should Labour form the next government. Some of the party's more traditional-minded members would like to see a national pension fund set up to invest in ethical and government projects. However, the new guard are planning a "stakeholder pension" to replace the state earnings-related pension scheme (Serps), the additional state scheme, and to rival personal plans. These would be provided through partnerships between the State and the private sector, with an emphasis on low cost and simplicity. The plans would have built-in life insurance. Savings plans would also be encouraged. Marc Hommel, a director of Liberty International Pensions, said that John Denham, Labour's pensions spokesman, has been careful to talk about partnership schemes with the private sector. Mr Hommel says that any government, be it Conservative or Labour run, will have to consider abolishing the rules that limit the amount of tax-free pension contributions a taxpayer can make. "It makes

Continued on page 32, col 4

Case for cash from Gas

Investors normally have a duty to promote the long-term health of the business they jointly own. But there are exceptions. British Gas shareholders have to decide what to do about one next month. For the clearest case arises when officialdom is bent on a company's financial destruction. This policy is embodied in the 1995 Gas Act, which left the group's supply business liable for about £30 billion of uneconomic contracts, and in the later Ofgas plan to force BG's Transco pipeline business to subsidise competition. Worst of all, this policy is bipartisan. The 1.7 million victims at least have a perfect response to party canvassers asking for our vote at the general election. Whether they are Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat, just say "Sorry, I am a British Gas shareholder". In the first eight years, shares in the privatised monopoly performed in line with the UK market average, even a little better during the recession: no "excess" profits. During the past two years, the share average has risen 30 per cent; British Gas shares have fallen roughly the same. At 223p, Merrill Lynch's European utilities team still says: "British Gas strikes us as the most overvalued in our research universe." Few investors would choose to back either of the group's two big regulated businesses from scratch. British Gas Trading, which supplies 19 million customers with gas, faces a progressive loss of market share with no upside and low margins. Costs are bound to stay higher than newcomers' and pension costs will soon rise by £35 million a year. To complete the happy picture, it still has "take-or-pay" contracts to buy gas at above today's prices, signed when it had to supply all the gas people wanted. On best estimates, which could be wildly wrong, these contracts have a value to



PERSONAL INVESTOR

GRAHAM SEARJEANT

shareholders of about minus £2.5 billion. Kindly oil companies might cancel them for £1 billion less. The Transco pipeline and storage business, hitherto the big steady earner, faces sustained regulatory attack. This aims to cut £400 million off profit and then to set annual cost-cutting targets that British Gas believes, rightly or wrongly, cannot safely be made. Without help from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, due to report in April, the business will become risky as well as low-profit. Ofgas seems to reckon that the remaining equity should be progressively eliminated. In this crazy situation, shareholders want their board to withdraw as much equity as possible. Tax permitting, it should hive off British Gas oil and gas production assets before these too are lost. At prices now being paid, unregulated businesses must be worth £4 billion of the group's £9 billion market value. The cost of take-or-pay contracts would ideally be met by drawing debt to be worth £11.7 billion gross. Transco's net profits should all go in dividends, since no expansion is justified. Once Transco is debt-laden, Ofgas

would have little equity left to eliminate: it must allow reasonable finance costs. The board, by contrast, aims to restructure British Gas in its best long-term trading interest — normally commendable. It wants to demerge British Gas Trading, as officialdom wishes, to compete independently in a wider utility service market. Sadly, Trading would be insolvent on its own. So the prize Morecambe Bay gasfields, worth £2 billion to £2.5 billion, are thrown in to form the new quoted vehicle Centrica, already nicknamed Cedrica. Management is likely to unwind gas deals in exchange for most of Morecambe. Good money is being thrown after bad. Dividends from the rump BG plc will be roughly halved and Centrica will pay nothing. The plan, designed to cope with the "take-or-pay" problem, is out of date. But management is stretched and committed, and things are now so bad that it cannot borrow more on Transco at much better than junk ratings. If controlling fund managers go along with the board, small investors will have two risky shares instead of one. Pessimists should lead ahead of the split. But risk means things can go right too, so optimists can hope. British Gas might escape a Labour levy. Centrica is expected to start trading at about 45p a share, but has speculative value. If gas contracts are dealt with, it would appeal to a power generator that wanted a huge, nationwide distributor. Worth keeping for a while. BG is at the mercy of the MMC. If Sir Graeme Odgers, its commonsense chairman, has the courage to reject neo-socialist Ofgas economics and official solidarity, he will at least insist that Transco be allowed enough profit for market value to match regulatory value. The City thinks he won't. Over to you Sir Graeme.

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Credit cards can save holders from embarrassing moments but rates vary and it may pay to switch to another issuer

Transatlantic temptation

Gavin Lumsden on the attraction of switching to US credit cards

If your credit card is suffering a Christmas spending hangover, you could switch to a card with a lower rate. Many small issuers, particularly the US firms such as MBNA International and Capital One, are trying to make the switch as easy as possible and are offering low introductory rates to tempt you across. They want to break the stranglehold of the seven high street banks which dominate 85 per cent of the credit card market in the UK despite their high charges.

The latest challenge is from RBS Advanta, a joint venture between the Royal Bank of Scotland and Advanta, a US credit card issuer, which is offering an introductory rate of 9.9 APR on its standard and gold Visa cards until January 1998. The APR will then rise to 8.88 per cent above the base rate, currently 6 per cent. On today's terms this would give an APR of 15.9 per cent for purchases and 18.3 per cent for

cash advances, much better than the 20-plus per cent rates available from the high street issuers. In addition there is no annual fee and 56 days' interest-free credit.

RBS Advanta claims switching to them could save you up to £99 this year if you are currently borrowing £1,000 on a credit card from a bank.

The most expensive is Barclaycard Standard Visa. Borrow £2,000 with it this year and it will cost you £189 more than with RBS Advanta, and £278 more on £3,000. There are similar savings to be had ditching the Visa and Access cards issued by the Midland, Lloyds, NatWest and TSB.

High charging is not restricted to the banks, however. With 20.9 per cent APR on purchases, the GM Visa Card

comes out £88 more expensive on £1,000, £176 on £2,000 and £265 on £3,000.

But Rod Urganhart, managing director of People's Bank Connecticut, one US issuer that has not yet succumbed to making a low-cost offer, says that borrowers could get a shock when the offers end and the APR jumps suddenly. The People's Bank APR is currently 14.4 per cent and there is no annual fee.

To make its argument even more compelling RBS Advanta has also implemented a "transfer and save" service. Once you have filled in the one-page application form and had your creditworthiness scrutinised, the company will send you a card, a PIN number and four cheques. You can then start your ac-

count by sending off a cheque or if this is too much effort ring up with your PIN number.

Mark Austin, planning and development manager at RBS Advanta, says you can also use the cheques to pay off large bills from doctors, solicitors or architects who would not normally accept credit cards. However, there is no cheque guarantee card.

He encourages people to keep their original card going and to pay it off via the phone with the RBS Advanta card. This way you can maintain perks such as air miles and still benefit from a lower rate. There are no plans to add these perks to RBS Advanta, says Mr Austin. "It is much more important that people get a better price," he says.

Mr Urganhart disagrees. He advises people cut up their old cards and avoid the complication of dealing with two balances. But whatever you do you can't lose, he says. "The big winner is the consumer."

Low-cost pensions may spark price war

Continued from page 31

no sense to allow a person under 30 earning £10,000 to put only 17.5 per cent of their earnings into a pension plan," he said. "That will not provide them with a sensible amount to live on when they retire. Both parties will need to look at encouraging people to make better provision for their old age."

Meanwhile, the pensions market is already changing, in anticipation of a new occupant at No Ten. Suddenly everyone is eager to offer politically correct low-cost pensions, a develop-

ment that seems likely to result in a price war, reducing charges. After last week's launch by Eagle Star of a no-frills pension plan, Liberty Life will, on Monday, unveil details of its new pension. Liberty pledges that its costs will be as low as those of Eagle Star and Virgin.

Mr Hommel believes that in time traditional pension providers will be forced to reduce and clarify charges. "The long-established companies are going to have to change to survive," he said. "They have to have sustainable cost structures, a poor public image, technology which is out of date, and

the baggage of old products and systems."

He believes pensions of the future will have to be low-cost and flexible, but will still need to tie up money for 25 years. "Temptation being what it is, people would tend to spend the money they had saved up unless it was out of their grasp. Nevertheless, pension providers will need to allow people to take premium holidays, and reduce or increase premiums regularly without penalty. The workforce is changing and so are working patterns."

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Far from amicable proposal in disguise

One major qualification for advancement at an insurance company has always been the ability to yawn with your mouth shut. But besides being able to disguise boredom, the aspiring senior executive must also possess a talent for tortuous language. The ability to present facts in an unintelligible manner, while making much of your commitment to plain English, is an essential weapon in the never-ending campaign to keep customers in the dark.

Scottish Amicable has this week announced its plan to shed its mutual status and become a quoted company in a two-stage process (see page 39). One would think a crack obscurantist team has been at work on the proposals to ensure that the policyholders do not guess that they are getting a poor deal and give a resounding "yes" to the proposals.

Unlike its fellow mutual, the Norwich Union, Scottish Amicable



ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

has decided not to offer shares to its 1.1 million with-profits policyholders who are the owners of the business. Instead, it has decided to distribute two sets of bonuses to be added to policies at demutualisation and at flotation, in an attempt to appear doubly generous.

The figures, however, tell a different story. The average payout under the first bonus, estimated at £75 million, will be a measly £68. Anyone with a 25-year policy maturing this year should stand to receive £1,503, but this will merely compensate for

less than sparkling past investment performance.

Meanwhile, Scottish Amicable's directors will have the chance of far greater rewards under a new employee share scheme, the terms of which are another piece of impenetrable prose. Provided that the new business fund, to be set up after demutualisation, increases in value by at least 15 per cent a year, the board could be in line for six-figure or seven-figure share packages. How great it is to be an Amicable man!

Asked why its policyholders would not be receiving shares, Scottish Amicable could give no satisfactory answer. In light of this, it will be interesting to hear its response if a predator emerges offering shares to policyholders. A bid is now an increasingly likely prospect and is the main reason why Scottish Amicable is seeking to change its status, despite its protestations to the contrary. Recently directors have been obsessed with fears of a hostile takeover.

The proposals will be put to the vote in March. Scottish Amicable is hoping that they will be carried without demer. They can take comfort that policyholders rarely rebel because they are never placed in full possession of the facts.

In this instance, policyholders should not blindly believe that the board is acting in their best interests. If shares are good enough for the directors, why should those who own the business be denied a slice of the action?

Sara McConnell on the merits of insuring against random checks by the Revenue

Watch out for that non-racing certainty

Taxpayers should not be panicked into buying insurance that could cover their accountant's fees in case they are picked at random for investigation by the Inland Revenue. According to the leading chartered accountants' body, they can statistically expect random investigations just once every 1,000 years.

The advent of self-assessment for nine million taxpayers who receive a tax return from this April gives the Inland Revenue new powers to investigate people's affairs at random, without giving reasons for its actions. Taxpayers will have to produce their records to show that their affairs are in order or else face penalties. Those with accountants will face higher bills for the extra work that the accountant has to do to satisfy the Revenue.

Firms offering insurance against these higher fees are using the Revenue's new powers as a sales hook to persuade people to take out the cover. Brochures warn people that they will be at greater risk of investigation under the new regime. One leader, from Professional Fee Protection, begins: "Self-assessment — the bare facts: Every business is likely to be investigated... The Revenue no longer needs a reason to investigate you... Mistakes and delays can incur heavy penalties... The Inland Revenue is all powerful and it also has limitless patience..."

Investigations will include even those whose affairs appear to be in order.

Most policies are sold to taxpayers by their accountants who bulk-buy the insurance and sell it on.

But Robert Maas, chairman of the technical committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, said: "People can expect to be randomly audited only once every 1,000 years statistically. The Inland Revenue has said it only intends to do 9,000 random audits a year out of nine million. These policies are not necessarily a rip-off, but the risks of an investigation are not that great."

Mr Maas, who is also a partner at Blackstone Franks, the firm of chartered accountants, added that anyone taking out a policy needed to read the small print carefully, particularly the policy's definition of what constitutes an investigation.

He said: "The policy should cover any investigation by the Revenue except where there is fraud by the taxpayer. It is unlikely to cover the cost of simple queries but should define at what stage these turn into an investigation."

The cost of cover depends on how the policy is set up. Many accountants pay insurers for all their clients to be covered and then sell the cover on, as premiums of between about



The clues point to self-assessment, but will you need a Hercule Poirot to explain them?

£30 and £60 for about £60,000 of cover. There is nothing to stop accountants charging clients automatically unless they object.

The sale of policies is not regulated in any way. Mr Maas said: "The client has to take the policy on trust from the accountant. What will happen if the insurer won't pay out is that the client will turn on his accountant and say: 'I'm not paying your fee.'"

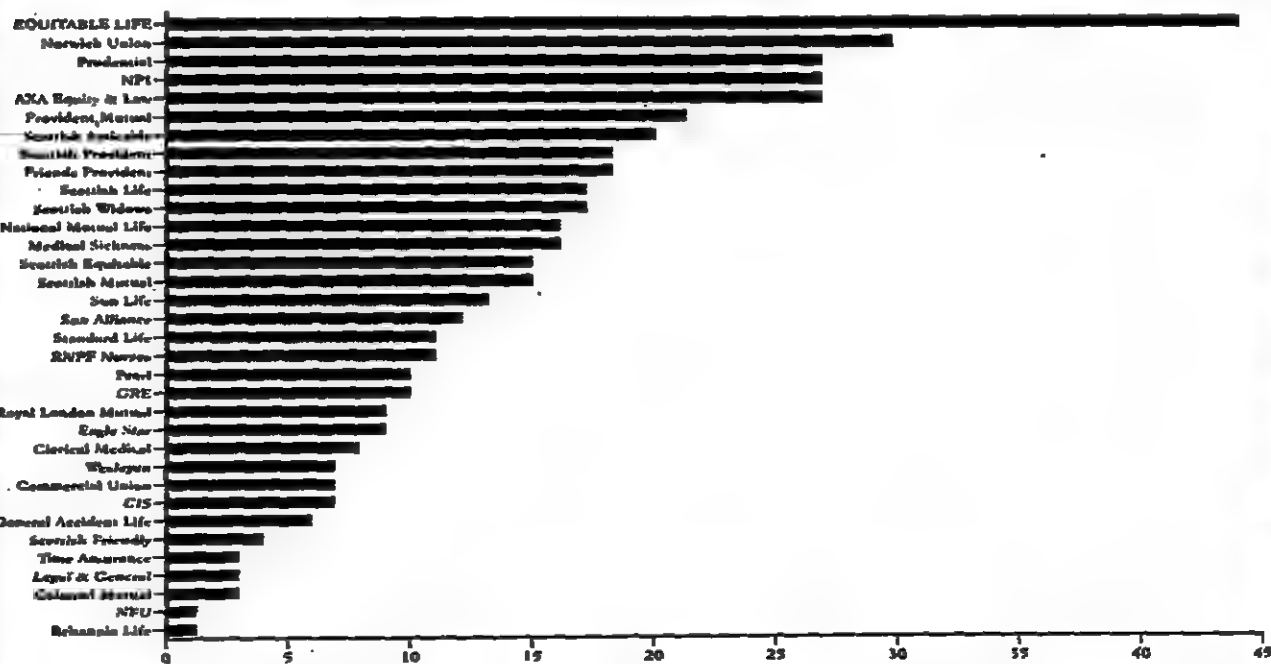
The Inland Revenue expressed concern over the claims made in some brochures. It said: "There are not going to be significantly more investigations under self-assessment. It is rubbish to say that every business is likely to be investigated. There will be a code of practice for investigations which will make it clearer what is going and give people more certainty."

Random investigations would not start until 1998, the Revenue added.

Roy Murray, of Professional Fee Protection, said: "The Revenue would say that wouldn't they? Kenneth Clarke announced another 2,000 investigators in last November's Budget. Only someone who had their head in the sand would think there would be fewer investigations."

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A change in the law has helped flat occupants but many still do not know their new rights and their protection against eviction threats by landlords

Leaseholders under pressure

Occupants of leasehold flats, disputing large service charge bills are continuing to be threatened with the loss of their homes by landlords in spite of new rules giving leaseholders strengthened rights to resist such intimidation.

Leas, formerly the Leasehold Enfranchisement Advisory Service, reports continuing complaints from leaseholders that landlords are attempting to force them to pay by serving them with eviction notices, believing that many leaseholders will be unaware of their new rights.

But since October last year leaseholders have been safe from eviction unless and until the landlord can prove to a court that the charges are reasonable. Only if flat-owners still refuse to pay can they face eviction.

The Government was forced to bring in changes after reports in *The Times* that landlords were using eviction notices as a first resort in service charge disputes. This was part of a wider, disturbing pattern of intimidation of leaseholders by powerful landlords.

Peter Haler, chief executive of Leas, said: "Landlords are still daring tenants to take them to court. The problem is that tenants don't know their new rights." Since the beginning of this year, Leas has expanded its role and will now offer free advice on service charge disputes in addition to advising on buying freeholds and extending leases.

So what are your rights if you are having trouble with your landlord? Over the next three months, the remaining planks of a new raft of rights for leaseholders will be put in place after the implementation of the Housing Act 1996. Important new rights are already in place. These include:

■ The right to demand a court's confirmation that service charges are reasonable. If you receive a service charge demand you consider to be unreasonable, do not be panicked into paying up. As soon as you do, you implicitly accept the charge. The experts' advice is to wait. Before you pay anything the landlord has

Landlords are continuing to threaten flat-owners with eviction despite stronger rules, says Sara McConnell

to take his case to court and ask it to rule that his demand is reasonable. Ignore attempts to panic you by serving you with an eviction notice (the so-called section 146 notice). If you receive one, read it carefully. It should spell out your right to have the charges examined by a court. But there are several problems with this right. The first is defining what is "reasonable". It is unreasonable of you to believe you should have to pay nothing for insurance, repairs and maintenance. Equally it is almost certainly unreasonable to be faced with major works costing tens of thousands of pounds possibly to make good earlier shoddy work. The second problem is that the Government's proposed network of leasehold valuation tribunals (LVTs) will not be up and running until after April. LVTs are intended to offer a cheaper and easier route for leaseholders fighting service charge disputes. But until April, disputes will have to be handled by the county courts. Leaseholders could face open-ended bills for the landlord's costs if they lose as county courts have the power to award costs unlike LVTs. You could also find that your landlord asks your building society to pay the charge and add it to your outstanding debt. Societies are still paying up in spite of pressure from the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

■ Strengthened rights to buy the freehold of your block. It is now a criminal offence for your landlord not to offer you as leaseholders first refusal to buy the freehold of your block if he wants to sell. He faces a fine of up to £5,000 if he disobeys the law. The right of first refusal has been in place since 1987 but landlords flouted it with impunity because there were no sanctions for ignoring it. If you find your freehold has been sold without your knowledge, you can still fight back. You now have four months from when you find out you have a new landlord to

serve a notice on him. He has to tell you how much he paid for the freehold and explain your right to buy it to you. You then have six months, rather than three as previously, to buy. But these new rights rely on you knowing you have them. There is no onus on a new landlord to explain your rights unless you serve a notice.

■ Access to leasehold valuation tribunals. The existing network of tribunals is set to be expanded from April and will handle service charge disputes for the first time. The move is intended to overcome leaseholders' often-justified fears of expensive court action which prevented many from challenging their landlords. LVTs will charge a set fee and

will not have the power to award costs. A maximum fee of £500 is laid down in the Act. But the Government has still not decided how to structure the fee. It is considering charging £150 for an application and a sliding scale of pre-hearing fees up to a total of £500 based either on the number of flats in a block or the number of flat-owners. It has rejected the idea of charging according to the amount in dispute, which would have weighed disproportionately on those already facing the highest service charge bills.

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Bonuses and performance of markets don't add up

Gavin Lumsden on the reason for poor payouts from life companies

Millions of with-profit policyholders are once again left wondering what the stock markets have to do for life companies to pay out decent bonuses on their with-profit endowment policies.

1996 was not a bad year for equities, property or bonds, three sectors in which all with-profit funds invest. Broadly speaking most with-profit funds achieved a total pre-tax return of 11 per cent from their investments. And yet the four companies which have declared so far — Commercial Union, Friends Provident, General Accident and Norwich Union — are all paying top bonuses well short of this. Sources within the industry blame the poor payouts on the prudence of actuaries who are attempting to claw back the excessive bonuses of the 1980s.

Norwich Union disappointed its 2.1 million with-profit policyholders by keeping its bonuses for unsecured contracts at 6.5 per cent for savings and 7.5 per cent for pensions. Its rates for conventional policies stayed at a miserly 2.5 per cent for the sum assured and 4.5 per cent for attaching bonuses.

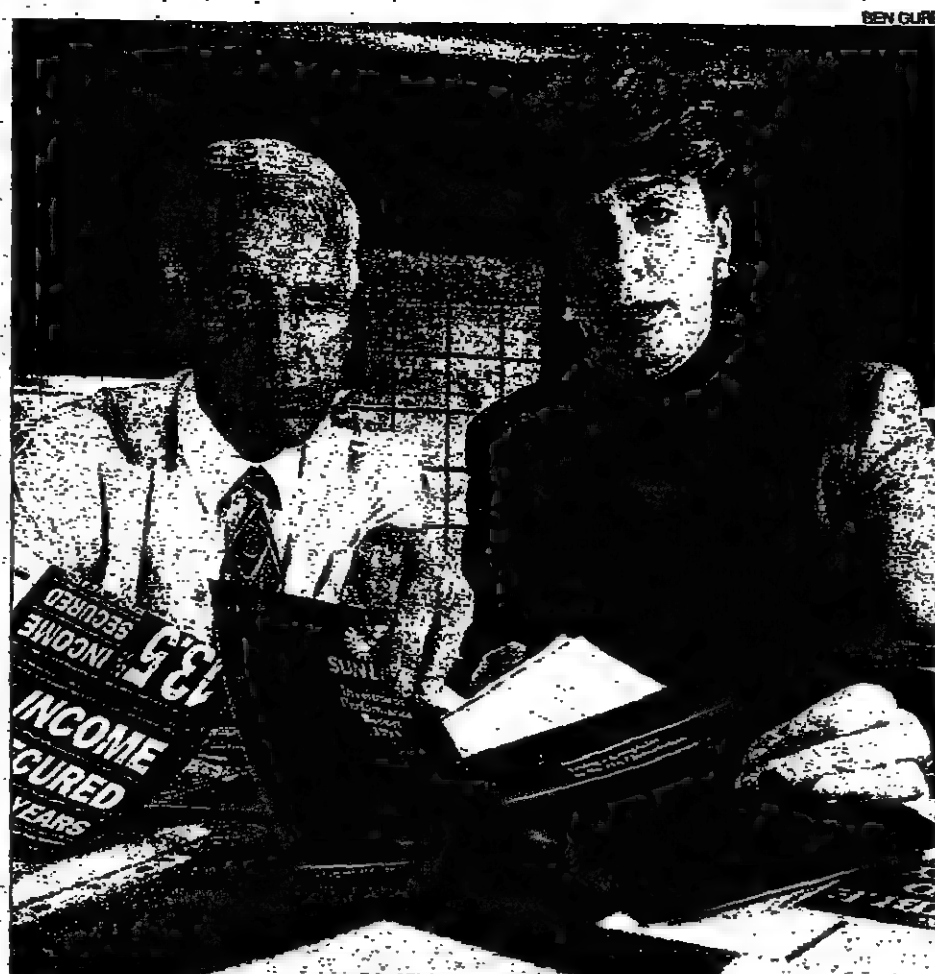
Commercial Union and Friends Provident paid slightly better. Ironically, General Accident, which shaved between 0.25 per cent and 0.5 per cent off

last year's bonuses, remains the biggest payer. Unsecured savings contracts got 7.25 per cent and unsecured pensions received 8.5 per cent. But GA admits that it is paying 5 to 10 per cent more than the underlying performance of its investments would dictate.

Richard Harvey, Norwich Union's finance director, dismisses as "completely ludicrous" speculation that the company is fattening itself up ahead of flotation this year at the expense of with-profit holders. "No, corporate arrangements would be recommended by our independent actuary or approved by the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) if it had any damaging effect on our with-profit holders," he says.

Mr Harvey denies the company is out of line with its competitors. "We are paying nearly £900 million in maturities. We are very careful to pay a fair amount in accordance with how the investments have done. The payout on our ten-year policies is almost identical with Friends Provident, within a few pounds."

Members of mutual insurer Scottish Amicable will doubtless be watching hawk-eyed how it sets its rates after its link-up this week with Swiss Re. It plans to demutualise this year and float in three to



Peter and Elizabeth Parsons. He claims he was misled and lost nearly £12,000

five years. However, it has promised to pay with-profit holders a special bonus of around £75 million this year, followed by further benefits worth another £200 million when it lists on the Stock Exchange (see page 39).

Holders of with-profit policies have every right to scrutinise the annual bonuses because, once announced, they become part of the guaranteed sum they will get at the end of the contract.

Bitter experience of falling rates this decade has taught many holders to be extra vigilant. Although the stock market has grown most years during the 1990s, low inflation and declining interest rates have contributed to a low growth environment which has halved the total return

from investments compared to the boom time of the 1980s. Bonus rates have fallen from more than 10 per cent at the beginning of the decade, forcing endowment holders to increase their premiums if they want to pay off mortgages, or accept lower returns on their investment bonds.

Yet with yields from with-profit funds levelling at around 7.5 per cent life companies say cautious investors are piling back into with-profit bonds in their anxiety to smooth what could be a rocky couple of years for stock markets.

However, the controversy of falling rates refuses to go away for those investors who were sold high-income-yielding with-profit products in the early 1990s.

Peter Parsons, a retired newscaster from Burghfield Common in Berkshire, has lost nearly £12,000 of the £60,000 he put into Sun Life's 50 Plus Secure Income Plan after the with-profits part of the product completely failed to protect his capital.

The plan was split 43.3 per cent into an annuity, designed to pay a guaranteed annual gross income of 13.5 per cent, and 56.6 per cent into Sun Life's with-profits bond which was supposed to grow to pay Mr Parsons back his £60,000 at the end of five years.

Unfortunately, Mr Parsons took out the plan in December 1991, just as Sun Life, along with the rest of the life industry, began to cut its bonus rates from their high of 9.5 per cent. The following May Sun Life withdrew the product as interest and annuity rates plummeted in the wake of the UK's exit from the exchange-rate mechanism.

Although Sun Life paid Mr Parsons 50 monthly payments of £487 as it promised, the company shocked him last year when it told him the with-profits bond had accrued only £48,189.90, £11,810.30 less than he was expecting.

Mr Parsons says Sun Life misled him because in an advertisement it described the plan as "the safe way to

Security fails on the capital front

protect your income from falling interest rates". Mr Parsons assumed the security applied to his capital not just the income.

He also accuses R J Temple of Brighton, his financial adviser, of mis-selling. After meeting Mr Parsons, one of its representatives advised him in writing to buy the plan because it was tax-efficient and offered comparable security to a building society account. R J Temple, which was paid nearly £2,500 for the sale, denies Mr Parsons was mis-sold the policy.

Sun Life refuses to compensate Mr Parsons, saying it would be unfair to other with-profit holders. In total 18,000 investors lost between 15 and

20 per cent of their capital through the plan — compensating them all would probably put it out of business.

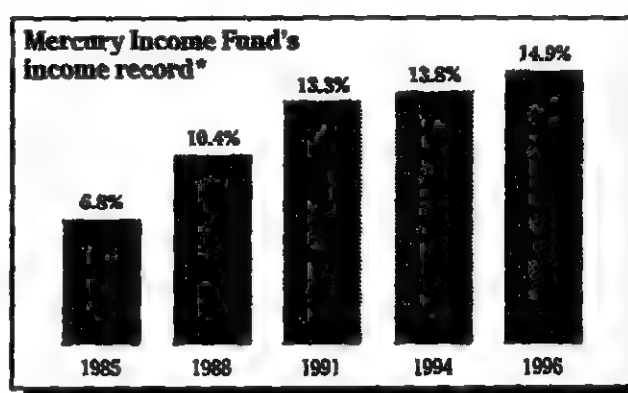
The company claims it was always clear that capital was never guaranteed. In addition, it says, it warned him every year that bonus rates were declining. It still believes Mr Parsons got a better deal than if he had put the money in a building society.

All this enrages Mr Parsons: "I'm retired and I'm looking after my money. I'm not a clever sort of person, but I do know my figures and my percentages. When I got my first set of accounts in 1992 I saw that it was never going to make it in five years. I rang up to inquire but never got an answer. Then you think it will improve and make it up later."

"If you get legitimately turned over you'd say fair enough — but when the market over the five years was very good it really makes you angry. Then they say I've done better than if I'd been in a building society. But I know I could have made £84,250 from deposit accounts, £6,000 more than I got in total from Sun Life — and I could have taken my money out."

Mr Parsons has now complained to the Personal Investment Authority Ombudsman.

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The other high street banks offer higher rates of interest on their accounts. For instance, Barclays customers will have to pay an annual interest of 18.6 per cent on an authorised overdraft plus a £5 per month fee. NatWest customers, meanwhile, will have to pay interest of 18.9 per cent plus £9 per month.

Other facilities on the new account include a £50 buffer zone for customers who accidentally slip into the red.

Customers will not be charged an unauthorised borrowing fee of 24.6 per cent.

Customers who stay in credit will benefit from interest on their balance of 0.25 per cent. This compares with interest of between 0.2 per cent and 0.3 per cent offered by other banks. This means that more than one million people will receive interest on their current accounts for the first time.

Midland claims that anyone with an authorised £250 overdraft with the bank for one week each month for a year will pay £7.25. This compares to £70 at Barclays, £106 at Lloyds and £118 at NatWest. Last year Barclays launched its Additions bank account, which will charge customers a fee. At the time it was seen as the first step towards the end of free banking for those in credit.

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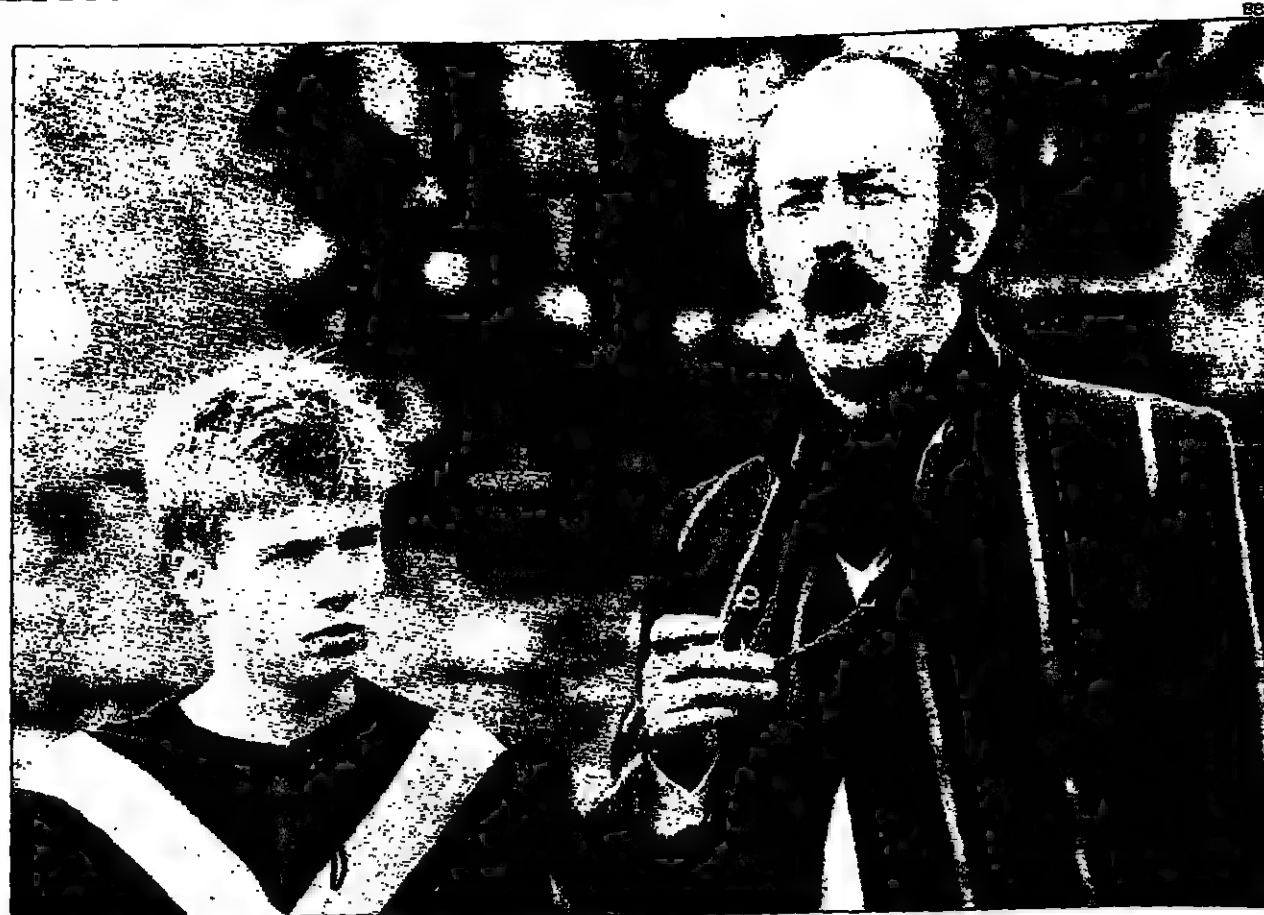
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The whistle is about to be blown on the teachers' pension scheme set-up, so making early retirement less attractive

Funding switch clouds early retirement hopes

Caroline Merrell says teachers are up in arms over the decision to change pension arrangements

The National Association of Head Teachers is planning to march on Parliament next week to protest over changes to the teachers' pension scheme, which will make it far less attractive to retire early.

At the end of last year, the Government announced that the costs of retiring teachers early should be borne by the local education authority, rather than by the pension scheme itself. The LEAs, many of which are short of cash, are far less likely to allow teachers to retire on the generous terms they previously enjoyed.

The Government estimates that 26,000 teachers will rush to take early retirement ahead of April, before they lose the privilege. The cost to the teachers' pension scheme, which is mainly funded by the taxpayer, is estimated to be around £37,000 per person – a total cost of £962 million. Last year, the cost to the pension scheme of the 13,000 teachers who took early retirement was £468 million. For example, a teacher who retires at 50 will get the same benefits as someone who had worked for another six years. The teachers' pension scheme is

also index-linked – another big perk of the job. The generous terms were offered to try to change the age profile of the UK's 500,000 teachers – over two thirds are over 40.

Understandably, when the change was announced, thousands of teachers telephoned their union to find out what they should do. Many are now in the process of applying for early retirement, while those who have agreed to take early retirement at the end of this academic year are bringing forward their retirement to ensure that they do not lose out on up-rated benefits.

One of the main teaching unions, the ATL, has launched a legal challenge to the Government's attempts to prevent a flood of teachers from taking early retirement. It claims that a recent letter from the Department for Education and Employment to the LEAs, stipulating the conditions for early retirement, is illegal, as it

is up to the individual boards of governors to decide which teachers to allow to retire.

On the other hand, financial advisers who specialise in offering advice to teachers believe that rushing to take early retirement may not be in the teachers' best interests.

Stephen Ingledew, from Frizzell, the independent financial adviser, said that teachers should try to get advice before rushing in to early retirement. He said: "If you opt for early retirement, check thoroughly the details of your pension benefits. This is the basis of any financial decisions to be made."

He said it could be in the interests of particular teachers to stay in employment – while earning, teachers could boost their pension benefits by taking out additional voluntary contributory plans. AVC plans, which can be used to boost benefits, can be taken

out with the employer's own pension, or employees can try to boost their pension with an AVC plan taken out with any provider.

Mr Ingledew said: "Compare the benefits against those you would have received if you retired at 60." He also points out that some LEAs have agreed to honour the existing arrangement for early retirement. He also reminds teachers to check out any state benefits they might be eligible for when they retire. State pensions only begin being paid at the usual retirement ages – 60 for women and 65 for men.

Mr Ingledew suggests that teachers should compare their income and outgoings in retirement against their estimated position if they opted for early retirement.

He said: "The comparative position may not be so bad because even though your pension will be less than your salary, your outgoings may also be lower."

Those who retire give up their rights to death-in-service benefits, equivalent to four times salary. He said: "There may be some need to replace this benefit."

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*Yields are based on investment within the M&G PEP and forecast as at 31.12.96 and are subject to change.

CHANGING TIMES

When a statement is not a statement

From the Rev W. R. Blow

Sir, I received a disturbing document in the post recently that purported to be a Masterloan Statement. The statement, headed "Below is your account status with Masterloan", shows me to be in debt to the extent of £5,728.80 to it for an alleged £5,000 loan. This, however, is totally untrue. I owe nothing; I have never applied for, nor received, a cash loan from Barclaycard/Barclayloan.

I consider it very threatening and unbecoming to receive fictitious claims of indebtedness of this sort. Such a "statement" must be even more frightening to those (perhaps elderly) who are not so certain in their minds of their financial position.

I should state that I do hold a Barclaycard, which I use. Normally the whole outstanding amount is paid off each month.

Towards the bottom of the so-called "statement" there is a note: "This is not a bill. Send no money now." This, while being temporarily reassuring,



tends to imply that money will have to be paid in the future, and that the addressee is committed to taking a loan. Without a phrase such as "Until you request a loan you are under no obligation to Barclayloan", the whole exercise looks like a very unpleasant attempt to intimidate and demand money from those who are not very certain about their financial matters.

Perhaps Barclaycard/Barclayloan has legally covered

itself by adding at the bottom of the "statement" that it is not a bill. However, I cannot possibly see any innocent intent in issuing a document which begins by stating "This is your account status" and ends by saying "This is not a bill send no money now". The aim of this can only be to confuse.

Yours faithfully,
RALPH BLOW,
46 Crofton Road,
Nottingham.

Tax returns

From Mr C. Timms

Sir, With reference to Susan Singleton's letter (January 11) on the subject of self-assessment, although the principle that taxpayers will not need to calculate their own tax bills following untimely submission of their returns is appreciated, achieving this result by way of assistance from the Inland Revenue is not always to be recommended as, in my experience as a practising accountant, HM Inspector of Taxes does not usually get it right first time, often resulting in tax liabilities being overstated.

Although requesting the assistance of professionals is not essential and remains a matter of personal choice, individuals who engage the services of a qualified accountant can rest assured that they pay the correct amount of tax and not a penny more than is properly due. Furthermore, receipt of independent professional advice can often result in the reduction of taxes due.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER TIMMS,
Easterbrook, Easton & Co,
Old Fore Street,
Sidmouth, Devon.

Who takes the risk in derivative trading?

From Mr Bruce T. Brown

Sir, May I be among the first to compliment your editorial team on its reports (January 11) on the Abbey National equity-linked Tessa and high income bonds.

I repeatedly ask "Why the sudden rash of derivative-based equity-linked savings and investment products?"

My cynicism tells me that they provide a clever mechanism for the institutions to pass the "risk" of derivatives

trading on to private individuals. If the markets do very well over the next five years, the institutions will do very nicely, thank you, but if they falter badly, there may not be much profit. This will not matter because the institutions will not have used their own money.

Yours sincerely,
BRUCE BROWN,
10 Trent Court,
Garrard Gardens,
Sutton Coldfield.

The Woolwich float and disqualified investors

From Mr Paul N. Boddam-Whetham

Sir, Having read details of the proposed transfer arrangements of the Woolwich Building Society to Woolwich plc, and as a "disqualified" investor having received the notice about the statutory cash bonus, I have written to John Stewart, chief executive, to highlight the following points: 1. There is an undisclosed number of long-term investors who regrettably had allowed their accounts to drop below £100 at the first reference date of December 31, 1995.

2. A survey of more than 40 such investors revealed that their average time with the society exceeded 12 years.

3. If all "disqualified" investors were to be included in the allocation of shares, the average cash equivalent bonus would be reduced only by £19, from £1,252 to £1,233, assuming a pessimistic estimate of 40,000 "disqualified" investors. Fewer "disqualified" members mean the reduction would be even less.

4. Members should be given the opportunity at the special meeting on February 11 to resolve that members with less than £100 in a qualifying investment account at December 31, 1995, but who have held such accounts for more than two years, ie, since December 31, 1993, should be included in the

basic distribution of shares. 5. "Disqualified" members who have kept up their accounts to £100 at December 1996 are eligible to vote, but are neither to receive shares nor the statutory cash bonus. They thus lose out twice (even though the statutory cash bonus is likely to be less than £10).

6. The Woolwich is lobbying to amend sections of the Building Societies Bill, asserting that if it had known of certain measures, it would have taken alternative action. If long-term members had known of the rules about the qualifying criteria, they too would have taken alternative action. They too are lobbying for a change to the rules.

7. The society is being inconsistent in its recent reminders for investors to top up accounts to the £100 level, without being prepared to treat with fairness those "disqualified" long-term investors whose balances had temporarily fallen.

The Woolwich Action Campaign is seeking fair treatment for loyal Woolwich members by highlighting these anomalies and contradictions in the actions of the society. Yours sincerely,
PAUL N. BODDAM-WHETHAM,
Highway,
32 Upper Hall Park,
Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire.

Letters or information for Weekend Money may be sent by fax to 0171-782 5082. Letters should include a daytime telephone number. The Times regrets it cannot always give individual replies or advice and asks that original documents are not sent in. No legal responsibility can be accepted for advice or statements in these columns and independent professional advice should be sought.

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Halifax Liquid Gold	2.45%	2.95%	3.25%	3.50%
Woolwich Prime Gold	2.00%	2.25%	3.00%	3.50%

Source: Moneyfacts 14th January 1997

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* Gross. The amount of interest paid without deduction of lower rate tax to eligible rate payers.
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Rates are correct at 11.1.97 but may vary. The circumstances in which the rates may vary are described in our Select Accounts Terms and Conditions and Charges leaflet. It is important to note that while investors opening a Select Instant Account will be investing members of the Society, they will not thereby become entitled to vote on and to receive benefits in connection with the Society's proposed conversion to a public limited company listed on the London Stock Exchange, unless they satisfy the relevant conditions. Interest will be paid after deduction of income tax at the lower rate (currently 20%) or, subject to the required certification, gross. Where the tax deducted exceeds an investor's tax liability (if any), a claim may be made to the Inland Revenue for repayment of tax. For individuals whose income falls within the lower rate band, the tax deducted will match their liability to tax on the interest and they will have no more tax to pay on it. Individuals who are liable at the higher rate of income tax of 40% will have to pay additional tax on the interest to cover the difference between the tax deducted and the higher rate tax due. Account balances below £5,000 will receive interest at the prevailing basic savings rate. Interest is not paid on balances below £50, unless the account holder is registered as being under 25 years of age. The account is for personal use only and is open to permanent UK residents. Full written terms and conditions will be sent with your application form. Following receipt of your completed application form, your confirmation slip will usually be sent to you within five full working days. Select Instant is a Share Account. Opening an account is subject to status and identification will be required. Minimum investment £5,000. Maximum holding with the Society £500,000.

THE TIMES MONEY INFORMATION SERVICE

How to plan an active retirement

THE Good Non-Retirement Guide strips away the mystique of financial planning and suggests ways to ensure greater security for yourself in retirement. Topics covered include pensions, tax, investment, starting your own business, and voluntary work. It also explains the range of benefits to which you are entitled and how to find the right financial adviser. The guide, written by Rosemary Brown, is published next Thursday, priced £14.99.

Birmingham Midshires Building Society has increased savings rates by an average of 0.34 per cent. Young savers with balances of more than £25 in the society's children's account, Smartstart, will benefit the most with a return of 5.80 per cent, a rise of 0.80 per cent. The Quantum High Interest 60-day notice account rates increase by up to 0.25 per cent (annual) and 0.24 per cent (monthly). The minimum opening balance on the Quantum High Interest account has risen sharply to £5,000 from £1,000 and First Class Instant Access to £10,000 from £1,000.

Hinton & Wild, the independent financial adviser, has announced the launch of a

new mortgage/annuity scheme in conjunction with Kent Reliance Building Society that will help elderly homeowners to increase their income. Mortgage funds on an "interest only" basis will be made available by Kent Reliance. The interest rate on the loan is fixed for life at 9 per cent per annum. The plan is open to homeowners aged 69 or over and couples need to have a minimum joint age of 145 years. A free leaflet is available from Hinton & Wild Limited, 374/378 Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7BB.

The fifteenth edition of Chase de Vere's *Peguide* looks into the second decade of personal equity plan (Pep) investing. The guide includes a full analysis of most of the Peps currently on the market plus a detailed comparison of the features of each individual Pep. The price of the guide is £12.95, which includes the updated July Performance Charts that will be mailed to subscribers on publication. Chase de Vere will refund the purchase price of the *Peguide* to any investor taking out a Pep through them. Call 0800 526 092 for a copy.

LIZANNE ROSE

GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS

ANNUAL INCOME			
Rates as at January 16, 1997			
Investment (£)	Company	Standard Rate (%)	
1 Year			
5,000	AIG Life	5.40	
10,000	AIG Life	5.60	
20,000	AIG Life	5.75	
50,000	AIG Life	5.90	
2 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.25	
3,000	ITT London & Edin	6.20	
3 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.60	
3,000	ITT London & Edin	6.30	
20,000	Hambro Assured	6.35	
50,000	Hambro Assured	6.40	
4 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	6.00	
3,000	ITT London & Edin	6.35	
10,000	Hambro Assured	6.55	
20,000	Hambro Assured	6.85	
5 Years			
1,000	Hambro Assured	6.05	
3,000	ITT London & Edin	6.70	

Source: Chambers of Bro 0171-434 4222. Net rates, income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

SAVERS' BEST BUYS

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Teachers' BS 01202 887171	Instant	£500	4.80	Y/Y
Scarbrough BS 0800 590578	Instant	£1,000	6.00	Y/Y
Northern Rock BS 0500 505000	Instant	£5,000	6.25	Y/Y
Bristol & West BS 0800 901109	Instant	£25,000	6.35	Y/Y

NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS	Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	pa
Cheltenham BS 0800 132351	POST-let 20	20 day p	£5,000	6.05	Y
Cheltenham & Glos 0800 717505	Direct 30	30 day p	£25,000	6.30	Y
Northern Rock BS 0500 505000	Select 60	60 day p	£10,000	6.50	Y
Leeds & Holbeck BS 0113 225777	Postal Bonus	30.4.98p	£10,000	7.00	OM

FIRST TESSAS (TAX FREE)	Account	of term	Deposit	Rate	paid
Sun Banking Corp 01438 744505	Fixed rate	5 year	£8,575	7.50	F/Y
NatWest Bank 0800 200400	Fixed rate	5 year	£5,000	7.45	F/Y
Investec Bank (UK) 0171 626 0879	Premier	5 year	£9,000	7.20	Y/Y
West Bromwich BS 0800 143688		5 year	£3,000	7.00	Y/Y

CREDIT CARDS BEST BUYS

CREDIT CARDS	Card type	Interest per month	APR%	Fee per annum
Co-operative Bank 0800 109000	Advantage Visa	0.64%NC	7.90%N	Nil
RBS Advanta 0800 07770	Visa	0.79%N	9.90%N	Nil
Capital One Bank 0800 869000	Visa	0.797%N	9.90%N	Nil

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

PERSONAL LOANS	APR	Monthly payment on £3,000 for 3 yrs no insurance
Northern Rock BS 0345 421421	12.90%N	£12.66
RBS Direct 0800 121125	14.00%	£14.78
Direct Line 0141 248 9988	14.80%N	£14.25

Nb. C = no interest free period, E = Available to comprehensive motor insurance policy holders over 22 years, F = Fixed Rate (all other rates variable), H = Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged, N = introductory rate for a limited period, OM = interest paid on maturity, P = By Post only

* RATES SHOWN ARE GROSS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGING WITHOUT NOTICE

PLEASE CHECK RATES BEFORE INVESTING

Source: Moneyfacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (1996 500 577)

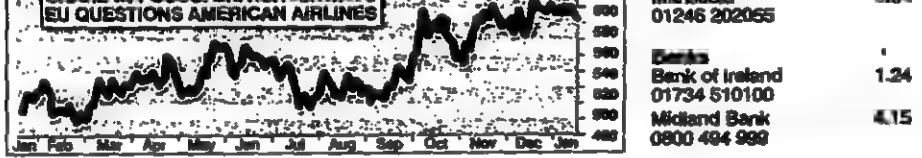
PIBS

Company	Gross coupon	Buying price	Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase
Birmingham Midshires	8.375%	104.95	8.922	100.17	1,000
Bradford & Bingley	11.625%	128.89	9.024	100.13	10,000
Bradford & Bingley	13.000%	143.81	9.036	100.20	10,000
Bristol & West	13.375%	148.27	9.021	100.34	1,000
Cheltenham	13.000%	143.19	9.079	100.12	1,000
Coverity	12.125%	135.97	8.887	100.75	1,000
First National	11.750%	126.87	9.282	100.25	10,000
Halifax	8.750%	100.76	8.907	100.82	50,000
Halifax	12.000%	136.29	8.580	100.28	50,000
Halifax	14.625%	158.70	8.580	100.00	50,000
Leeds & Holbeck	13.375%	149.25	8.862	100.23	1,000
Newcastle	10.750%	121.90	8.801	100.32	1,000
Newcastle	12.625%	143.04	8.826	100.45	1,000
Northern Rock	12.825%	143.78	8.781	100.14	1,000
Skipton	12.875%	143.65	8.962	100.48	1,000

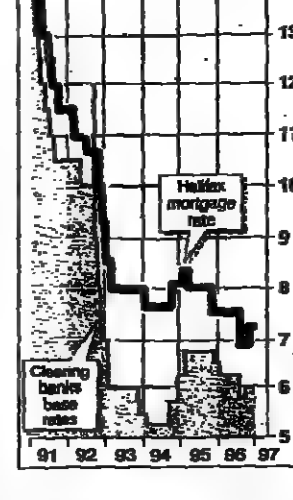
Company	Gross coupon	Buying price	Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase
Cheshire (28/08/27/03)	8.1563%	110.50	100.00	1,000	
First Nat (20/08/20/03)	8.48750%	101.50	100.00	1,000	

PIBS = Permanent Interest-bearing shares. Source: ABI AMRO House Council - 0171 801 0101

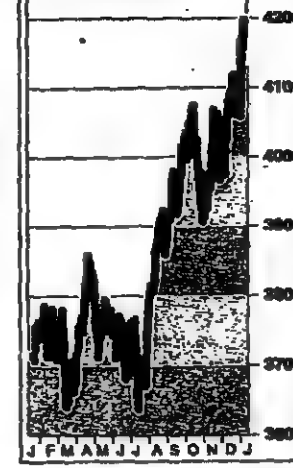
SHARE IN FOCUS: BRITISH AIRWAYS



BASE RATES V MORTGAGES



FT-SE 100 PRICE INDEX



LARGER LENDERS

Lender	Interest rate %	Loan size	Max %	Notes
Building Societies	2.95	to £250k	90	3% discount to 1.18%
Alfred & Lyle	2.85	to £100k+	75	2% disc-31.9.99
Bank of Ireland	3.00	to £200k	75	2% disc-28.2.99
Bank of Ireland	1.24	£20-145k	95	6.25% disc-6 mth
Bank of Ireland	3.50	£100k+	80	3% disc-6 mth

LARGER LOANS

Lender	Interest rate %	Loan size	Max %	Notes
Building Societies	0.25	£20-100k	95	6.99% disc-6 mth
Chorley & District	0.50	£50-120k	80	2% disc-6 mth
Mansfield	0.64	£75-125k	80	6.58% disc-6 mth
Bank of Ireland	1.24	£20-145k	95	6.25% disc-6 mth
Bank of Ireland	4.15	£50-100k	95	3% disc-6 mth

NATIONAL SAVINGS

Product	Rate	Term	Notes
Ordinary A/c	1.50	10-10,000**	0645 645000
Investment A/c	4.75	20-500**	0645 645000
Income Bond	6.00	£20,000-25,000**	0645 645000
First Opt Bond	6.00	£3,000-10,000**	0645 645000
Children's Bond	6.75	25-1,000	0645 645000
Govt Ex Rate	5.51	100-250,000	0645 645000
Capital Bonds	6.65	100-10,000	0645 645000
9th Index Linked	2.50	500-50,000, 60day	0645 645000

* First £10,000 at 4.5% for 1st year, rest goes for up to £100. Additional steps up to £25,000 for 2nd year, £25,000-50,000 for 3rd year, £50,000-100,000 for 4th year, £100,000-250,000 for 5th year, £250,000-500,000 for 6th year, £500,000-1,000,000 for 7th year, £1,000,000-2,500,000 for 8th year, £2,500,000-5,000,000 for 9th year, £5,000,000-10,000,000 for 10th year, £10,000,000-25,000,000 for 11th year, £25,000,000-50,000,000 for 12th year, £50,000,000-100,000,000 for 13th year, £100,000,000-250,000,000 for 14th year, £250,000,000-500,000,000 for 15th year, £500,000,000-1,000,000,000 for 16th year, £1,000,000,000-2,500,000,000 for 17th year, £2,500,000,000-5,000,000,000 for 18th year, £5,000,000,000-10,000,000,000 for 19th year, £10,000,000,000-25,000,000,000 for 20th year, £25,000,000,000-50,000,000,000 for 21st year, £50,000,000,000-100,000,000,000 for 22nd year, £100,000,000,000-250,000,000,000 for 23rd year, £250,000,000,000-500,000,000,000 for 24th year, £500,000,000,000-1,000,000,000,000 for 25th year, £1,000,000,000,000-2,500,000,000,000 for 26th year, £2,500,000,000,000-5,000,000,000,000 for 27th year, £5,000,000,000,000-10,000,000,000,000 for 28th year, £10,000,000,000,000-25,000,000,000,000 for 29th year, £25,000,000,000,000-50,000,000,000,000 for 30th year, £50,000,000,000,000-100,000,000,000,000 for 31st year, £100,000,000,000,000-250,000,000,000,000 for 32nd year, £250,000,000,000,000-500,000,000,000,000 for 33rd year, £500,000,000,000,000-1,000,000,000,000,000 for 34th year, £1,000,000,000,000,000-2,500,000,000,000,000 for 35th year, £2,500,000,000,000,000-5,000,000,000,000,000 for 36th year, £5,000,000,000,000,000-10,000,000,000,000,000 for 37th year, £10,000,000,000,000,000-25,000,000,000,000,000 for 38th year, £25,000,000,000,000,000-50,000,000,000,000,000 for 39th year, £50,000,000,000,000,000-100,000,000,000,000,000 for 40th year, £100,000,000,000,000,000-250,000,000,000,000,000 for 41st year, £250,000,000,000,000,000-500,000,000,000,000,000 for 42nd year, £500,000,000,000,000,000-1,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 43rd year, £1,000,000,000,000,000,000-2,500,000,000,000,000,000 for 44th year, £2,500,000,000,000,000,000-5,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 45th year, £5,000,000,000,000,000,000-10,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 46th year, £10,000,000,000,000,000,000-25,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 47th year, £25,000,000,000,000,000,000-50,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 48th year, £50,000,000,000,000,000,000-100,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 49th year, £100,000,000,000,000,000,000-250,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 50th year, £250,000,000,000,000,000,000-500,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 51st year, £500,000,000,000,000,000,000-1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 52nd year, £1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 53rd year, £2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000-5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 54th year, £5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 55th year, £10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 56th year, £25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 57th year, £50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 58th year, £100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 59th year, £250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 60th year, £500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 61st year, £1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 62nd year, £2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 63rd year, £5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 64th year, £10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 65th year, £25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 66th year, £50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 67th year, £100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 68th year, £250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 69th year, £500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 70th year, £1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 71st year, £2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 72nd year, £5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 73rd year, £10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 74th year, £25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 75th year, £50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 76th year, £100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 77th year, £250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 78th year, £500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 79th year, £1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 80th year, £2,500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 81st year, £5,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 82nd year, £10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 83rd year, £25,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 84th year, £50,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 85th year, £100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 86th year, £250,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 for 87th year, £500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000-1,00

Our Economics Editor on a popular government security

Safety through the ages

ECONOMICS EXPLAINED

3 GILTS

Gilts are securities issued by the Government when it needs to borrow money. Short for "government securities", they were so named in the 19th century because they were regarded as the safest form of investment. In bald terms, the gilt investor lends the Government money in return for interest.

This is by far the most important way the Government finances its deficits. By the 1990s, over £150 billion of gilts were in issue, accounting for more than 60 per cent of the outstanding national debt.

History lesson. The national debt came into being in 1694 when William III had to raise £1.2 million to finance war with France. The financiers who raised the money were given a charter to form a bank. It became the Bank of England.

What a gilt gives you. You get a certificate that entitles you to a fixed flow of interest income over a fixed period, at the end of which you get a fixed capital repayment. Each gilt has its own name, which gives you much of the information you need. Take, as an example, £1,000 nominal of 8½ per cent Treasury Loan 2007. The £1,000 nominal is the amount of a gilt. This is the capital repayment you receive when it matures. The 8½ per cent is the coupon or rate of interest the Government will pay. The 2007 is the maturity date when the Government repays the capital.

Treasury loan is simply the name given to a particular gilt. Others are called Exchequer Loan, War Loan or Consolidated Stock. Professional traders in the gilt market sometimes give gilts nicknames. Two issues of gilts maturing in the year 2000 were called Grecians after the famous haircare product. The 13 per cent 2000 issue was the Big Greek, the 9 per cent 2000 issue the Baby Greek. One index-linked gilt, issued just before one of the elections of Margaret Thatcher's reign and convertible into a conventional gilt after the election, was called a Maggie May.

Conventional versus index-linked. The conventional gilt was described above. An index-linked gilt differs in that both the interest payments throughout the life of the stock and the amount payable when it matures are adjusted in line with the British inflation rate. Index-linked gilts, which were dreamt up to give investors some protection against rising inflation, came into being after Sir Geoffrey Howe's 1981 Budget speech. To start with, they were restricted to institutions such as pension funds; but in 1982 they were made available to everyone.

Prices and yields. The price of a gilt is what you would pay in the market to buy



Messengers sprint from the Bank of England with news of a rate change

one and how much you would get if you sold the stock rather than wait for the capital repayment on maturity. The best way to track gilt prices is in newspaper listings. A price of £99½ — rather anachronistically, gilts are still priced in thirty-seconds — means that, for every £100 nominal of stock, the price in the market is £99½ or £99.31p.

The yield is the way you measure the return on your investment. It differs from the coupon because it is an interest rate based on the actual price of the stock, not the nominal amount. One of the most confusing features of the gilt market is that, when prices rise, yields fall, and vice versa. Take an 8½ per cent stock whose price is quoted as £99½. That means that you only have to pay £99.31p to get the 8½ per cent interest and a £100 capital repayment. In this case, the yield is 8.56 per cent. Separately, the newspapers quote redemption yields. This is the total return from buying a gilt, including the flow of interest and the capital gain or loss from holding the gilt until maturity.

What moves gilt prices? Two big influences on a gilt price are the likely level of general interest rates and

prospects for inflation. A coupon fixed at 10 per cent may look stingy when bank interest rates are at 15 per cent, but generous when bank rates are down at 6 per cent. The behaviour of inflation is important because higher prices would eat into your return on a security that offers a fixed interest rate.

How to buy and sell gilts. There are two main methods. You can buy direct from the Bank of England when new stock is issued, generally through a gilt auction. Or you can buy from the market through your bank or stockbroker or the National Savings Stock Register.

Further information. For general advice and a leaflet *Investing in Gilts: A guide for the small investor* contact the Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8AH; tel 0171-601 4540. For buying gilts through the NSSR, contact the Department for National Savings, Blackpool FY3 9YF; tel 01253 697333. For a list of stockbrokers, contact the London Stock Exchange, Old Broad Street, London EC2N 1HP; tel 0171-797 1000.

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*Source: Mirostat, offer-to-bid, net income reinvested, UK Equity Income Sector. All figures to 2.12.96. 1% discount only applies to lump sum PEP investments until 1.3.97. Past performance is no guide to the future. The price of units and the income from them may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount originally invested. PEP legislation can change at any time and the value of tax concessions will depend on individual circumstances. The GT PEP is managed by GT Global Investment Funds Ltd, regulated by IMRO and the Personal Investment Authority. The GT Income Fund was launched in September 1973 and is managed by GT Global Fund Management Ltd (part of the LGT Group) which is regulated by IMRO and is a member of AUIF, issued by GT Global Investment Funds Ltd.

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Address _____

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7.05%

GROSS

AMOUNT YOU INVEST	ANNUAL % GROSS	MONTHLY % GROSS	ANNUAL % NET	MONTHLY % NET
£100,000+	7.05	5.64	6.80	5.44
£50,000+	6.70	5.36	6.45	5.16
£25,000+	6.60	5.28	6.33	5.08
£10,000+	6.50	5.20	6.25	5.00

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44 UNIT TRUST PRICES

[illegible]

Equities end on steady note

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES						
100	100	100	100	100	100	100
101	101	101	101	101	101	101
102	102	102	102	102	102	102
103	103	103	103	103	103	103
104	104	104	104	104	104	104
105	105	105	105	105	105	105
106	106	106	106	106	106	106
107	107	107	107	107	107	107
108	108	108	108	108	108	108
109	109	109	109	109	109	109
110	110	110	110	110	110	110
111	111	111	111	111	111	111
112	112	112	112	112	112	112
113	113	113	113	113	113	113
114	114	114	114	114	114	114
115	115	115	115	115	115	115
116	116	116	116	116	116	116
117	117	117	117	117	117	117
118	118	118	118	118	118	118
119	119	119	119	119	119	119
120	120	120	120	120	120	120

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
BANKS						
121	121	121	121	121	121	121
122	122	122	122	122	122	122
123	123	123	123	123	123	123
124	124	124	124	124	124	124
125	125	125	125	125	125	125
126	126	126	126	126	126	126
127	127	127	127	127	127	127
128	128	128	128	128	128	128
129	129	129	129	129	129	129
130	130	130	130	130	130	130
131	131	131	131	131	131	131
132	132	132	132	132	132	132
133	133	133	133	133	133	133
134	134	134	134	134	134	134
135	135	135	135	135	135	135
136	136	136	136	136	136	136
137	137	137	137	137	137	137
138	138	138	138	138	138	138
139	139	139	139	139	139	139
140	140	140	140	140	140	140

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
BREWERS, PUBS & REST						
141	141	141	141	141	141	141
142	142	142	142	142	142	142
143	143	143	143	143	143	143
144	144	144	144	144	144	144
145	145	145	145	145	145	145
146	146	146	146	146	146	146
147	147	147	147	147	147	147
148	148	148	148	148	148	148
149	149	149	149	149	149	149
150	150	150	150	150	150	150
151	151	151	151	151	151	151
152	152	152	152	152	152	152
153	153	153	153	153	153	153
154	154	154	154	154	154	154
155	155	155	155	155	155	155
156	156	156	156	156	156	156
157	157	157	157	157	157	157
158	158	158	158	158	158	158
159	159	159	159	159	159	159
160	160	160	160	160	160	160

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
BUILDING & CONSTRUCT						
161	161	161	161	161	161	161
162	162	162	162	162	162	162
163	163	163	163	163	163	163
164	164	164	164	164	164	164
165	165	165	165	165	165	165
166	166	166	166	166	166	166
167	167	167	167	167	167	167
168	168	168	168	168	168	168
169	169	169	169	169	169	169
170	170	170	170	170	170	170
171	171	171	171	171	171	171
172	172	172	172	172	172	172
173	173	173	173	173	173	173
174	174	174	174	174	174	174
175	175	175	175	175	175	175
176	176	176	176	176	176	176
177	177	177	177	177	177	177
178	178	178	178	178	178	178
179	179	179	179	179	179	179
180	180	180	180	180	180	180

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
BUILDING MATERIALS						
181	181	181	181	181	181	181
182	182	182	182	182	182	182
183	183	183	183	183	183	183
184	184	184	184	184	184	184
185	185	185	185	185	185	185
186	186	186	186	186	186	186
187	187	187	187	187	187	187
188	188	188	188	188	188	188
189	189	189	189	189	189	189
190	190	190	190	190	190	190
191	191	191	191	191	191	191
192	192	192	192	192	192	192
193	193	193	193	193	193	193
194	194	194	194	194	194	194
195	195	195	195	195	195	195
196	196	196	196	196	196	196
197	197	197	197	197	197	197
198	198	198	198	198	198	198
199	199	199	199	199	199	199
200	200	200	200	200	200	200

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
CHEMICALS						
201	201	201	201	201	201	201
202	202	202	202	202	202	202
203	203	203	203	203	203	203
204	204	204	204	204	204	204
205	205	205	205	205	205	205
206	206	206	206	206	206	206
207	207	207	207	207	207	207
208	208	208	208	208	208	208
209	209	209	209	209	209	209
210	210	210	210	210	210	210
211	211	211	211	211	211	211
212	212	212	212	212	212	212
213	213	213	213	213	213	213
214	214	214	214	214	214	214
215	215	215	215	215	215	215
216	216	216	216	216	216	216
217	217	217	217	217	217	217
218	218	218	218	218	218	218
219	219	219	219	219	219	219
220	220	220	220	220	220	220

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
DISTRIBUTORS						
221	221	221	221	221	221	221
222	222	222	222	222	222	222
223	223	223	223	223	223	223
224	224	224	224	224	224	224
225	225	225	225	225	225	225
226	226	226	226	226	226	226
227	227	227	227	227	227	227
228	228	228	228	228	228	228
229	229	229	229	229	229	229
230	230	230	230	230	230	230
231	231	231	231	231	231	231
232	232	232	232	232	232	232
233	233	233	233	233	233	233
234	234	234	234	234	234	234
235	235	235	235	235	235	235
236	236	236	236	236	236	236
237	237	237	237	237	237	237
238	238	238	238	238	238	238
239	239	239	239	239	239	239
240	240	240	240	240	240	240

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
ENGINEERING						
241	241	241	241	241	241	241
242	242	242	242	242	242	242
243	243	243	243	243	243	243
244	244	244	244	244	244	244
245	245	245	245	245	245	245
246	246	246	246	246	246	246
247	247	247	247	247	247	247
248	248	248	248	248	248	248
249	249	249	249	249	249	249
250	250	250	250	250	250	250
251	251	251	251	251	251	251
252	252	252	252	252	252	252
253	253	253	253	253	253	253
254	254	254	254	254	254	254
255	255	255	255	255	255	255
256	256	256	256	256	256	256
257	257	257	257	257	257	257
258	258	258	258	258	258	258
259	259	259	259	259	259	259
260	260	260	260	260	260	260

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	%	P/E
INSURANCE						
261	261	261	261	261	261	261
262	262	262	262	262	262	262
263	263	263	263	263	263	263
264	264	264	264	264	264	264
265	265	265	265	265	265	265
266	266	266	266	266	266	266
267	267	267	267	267	267	267
268	268	268	268	268	268	268
269	269	269	269	269	269	269
270	270	270	270	270	270	270
271	271	271	271	271	271	271

Losing run casts shadow over coach's arrival while Scotland seek to reinforce home rule

Ashton driven by need to change luck of the Irish

FROM DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT, IN DUBLIN

BRIAN ASHTON may possess the look of a leprechaun, but it may be too much to ask the former Bath coach to conjure some of the magical properties attributed to Ireland's mythical little men. In any event, Ireland felt sufficiently confident in their preparations for the rugby union five nations' championship match with France at Lansdowne Road today to cancel their light training yesterday and opt instead for relaxation.

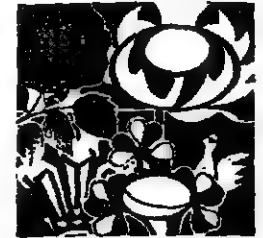
That was in marked contrast to their opponents, who travelled from Paris after losing the services of Richard Dourthe. The Dax centre was knocked out during training on Thursday and his place goes to Stephane Glas, which could act in France's favour. Glas is a talented performer and less prone than Dourthe to fits of temperamental that have cost penalties in the past and, after the meeting with England last year, led to a suspension for kicking Ben Clarke.

However, Dourthe is also the team's goalkicker and he scored four out of five attempts against South Africa last month in a team that also included Christophe La-

maison, the long-range kicking exponent. Those duties will now be shared between Thomas Castaignède and Alain Penaud, both of them accomplished marksmen on their day yet both returning to the international arena after a period of absence.

Yet it is not in the area of goalkicking, significant though that is, that Ireland

FIVE NATIONS



CHAMPIONSHIP

may struggle in the match, sponsored by Irish Permanent. After all, they have Eric Elwood in their ranks and he has scored 135 points in his 16 internationals. It is in the matter of tries that Ireland stand deficient. They may argue that France have fared little better at try-scoring this season — four against Wales

in September were followed by none in two games against South Africa — but their opponents' potential remains high.

Pierre Villepreux, newly installed as the assistant coach, has emphasised all week the need to keep the ball in hand and it is impossible to believe that their midfield cannot create enough opportunities out of the damp Dublin air to give them their thirteenth successive win against Ireland. Unless, of course, Ashton has distilled sufficient drive into the Ireland forwards to deny France the opportunities they seek.

"I have tried to build the confidence of the players, after the poor results of the previous three games, and provide a framework of the game with which they feel comfortable," Ashton, who only joined his charges in Limerick last weekend, said.

"The quality of the set-piece game has to be paramount but there are forwards who can run, handle and cause the opponent problems," Ashton said.

"The framework must give the players options and I have tried to get over the message of personal responsibility on the field, not just relying on one or two players to dictate the course of the game. It's a simple formula but it does allow flexibility and it is designed specifically to play against France."

There are certain things one can expect the French to do well but, though they have all-round strength, they will only do some of those things well if we let them.

"The whole mood of the squad has been upbeat and positive this week. This is about Ireland, not about France, and focusing on what Irish players do well; we have no new caps, all of them have been there before and know what they have to do."

"If the players have any misgivings, then they are hiding them well. I have found them very supportive and enthusiastic; they have worked hard and I hope we have established a positive relationship."

"It's taken them 3½ days to get to where I wanted them to be and at times I thought we weren't going to make it — but the proof of the pudding will be on Saturday."

Under the coaching of Murray Kidd, Ireland lived in the shadow of defeat, though many will feel that was more the fault of the playing structure than of Kidd, the New Zealander who was dismissed in the wake of the defeat by Italy earlier this month.

Yet France, too, have to re-establish their credentials after losing both their away championship matches in Scotland and Wales, last season. Their success in European club competition suggests that they remain as competitive as ever but now the national strings must be drawn tighter together.



Ellis, Scotland's new hooker, the first player from Currie to be capped, practises his lineout throwing

Wales attempting to turn back powerful tide of recent history

BY GERALD DAVIES

AMID so much that is changing in rugby union, certain of its old virtues thankfully remain the same. The five nations' championship, so recently threatened with dismantlement, begins for Scotland and Wales in Edinburgh this afternoon and those who govern the future of the sport, and who very nearly tore the championship apart, need to take heed of the people, who are voting with their feet.

It is not hard to believe from the way Princes Street is ablaze with red and white that there are more Welsh people willing to part with their savings for the trip northwards than were willing to take the much shorter journey to Cardiff last weekend to see their team play the United States.

In contrast to the 13,500 who were at the Arms Park, it is believed that between 15,000 and 20,000 have arrived by air, road and rail in Scotland over the past few days, and the mobile phone have been busy engaged by those searching for the spare tickets.

The argument is constantly made that the standard of play in the northern hemisphere tournament cannot hold a candle to that achieved by those countries south of the equator. Evidence of this was provided by Australia's wins over Scotland and Wales and Wales's additional loss to South Africa last month.

To demean the competition

that begins today in the light of these failures is hardly a point worth making to the participants and the many millions who will be enthralled by the events of the next few weeks. Take them for what they are: moments of happy, sporting celebration. Over the years in this fixture Scotland and Wales have offered examples of the best that rugby can supply. It is hard to recall an indifferent match.

Of late, Scotland have had much the better record. They have won five of the past seven fixtures and if they succeed today will emulate what they achieved between 1989 and 1991, when they won on three successive occasions. Wales have to look back to 1983 for their Murrayfield victory.

"Some of our best rugby," Gavin Hastings wrote in his newspaper column, "has been against the Taffs. Matches between the two sides have produced some fantastic tries." Scotland have scored 19 against 12 in the last ten games. If Hastings can recall the try Eric Peters scored two years ago, which Hastings had initiated in his own half, then Wales will recall fondly Robert Jones's try in the early minutes of the same match.

Uncertainty hangs over the quality of both teams. Before their recent stuttering victory over Italy, Scotland had recorded four consecutive defeats — against England, New Zealand, twice, and Australia — while Wales can only show three successes in 11 outings

against national teams in the last 12 months.

The difference lies in that Scotland invariably pull out all the stops in the five nations' while Wales, on the other hand, rarely fulfil their potential. Having entered the last two championships with little hope, Scotland ended up competing for the grand slam.

"Scotland have an enviable ability," Terry Cobner, the Wales director of rugby, says "to play to their maximum capacity. The performance of the team is greater than the sum of the individual parts."

Some of those parts have changed since the Italy game. In addition to the late inclusion of Graham Ellis as hooker for the injured Kevin McKenzie, there are four other changes. Two of these can certainly be said to strengthen the team. Rob Walwyn returns as No 8 and captain, while Gary Armstrong resumes at scrum half instead of Bryan Redpath. The latter adds recognisable strength to a familiar and experienced back division.

Wales keep faith with the team that was originally chosen to play the US Eagles. Having missed that match, Jonathan Humphreys regains his place at hooker and captain and Neil Jenkins returns to the unfamiliarity of the full back position.

Wales are perceived to hold the key to the tight phases, but the question is whether they will be swift enough thereafter to match Scotland for pace in the loose, where the home team always seem to thrive on Murrayfield's firm surface.

Leicester keen to take their lead from Stransky

BY CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

DOMESTIC arguments this weekend in England — where foreign imports have forced down the number of English-born players in the Courage Club Championship first division — retain a cosmopolitan flavour. Joel Stransky, the former South Africa stand-off, makes his home debut for Leicester, in place of Rob Liley, against Bristol today.

Stransky's arrival at Wel-ford Road leaves just four English players in the regular No 10 position among the 12 first division sides. Lack of alternatives is a problem, but the concerns of the England team management are not those of Leicester as they set about regaining the lead, on points difference, from an inactive Wasps side.

Leicester also give a full league debut to Perry Fresh-water, a former New Zealand Colt, who takes over from Graham Rowntree in the front row. Rowntree has a call injury, but Neil Back, his England colleague, has recovered from a hand injury. Rory Underwood is on the right wing for only the third time on his 228th Leicester appearance, with Leon Lloyd preferred on the left.

Should Bristol lose, they would equal their worst run of seven league defeats and deep in their plight at the foot of the table. Paul Burke and David Corkery are on Ireland duty and while Simon Shaw's back problem has cleared up, their main hope must be that Leicester will have their minds on the Heineken Cup final against Brive, the French club, next Saturday.

Leicester's probable retrieval of the lead might last just 24 hours. Harlequins, gathering momentum once more, will resume the front-running tomorrow if they can end Saracens' unbeaten record at Enfield. Paddy Johns and Richard Wallace, who represented Ireland A yesterday, are due back from Dublin to play for Saracens.

Even if they appear to be out of the title race, Bath and Andy Robinson, their new coach, who takes his place in a reshuffled pack, urgently need a win at the Recreation Ground tomorrow.

Northampton inflicted one of the holders' four defeats, but are without four players on five nations' duty and have additional problems up front, with Gavin Walsh injured and Tim Rodder and Matt Volland having late checks.

If rumour about two, rather than four sides, going down to the second division becomes fact, West Hartlepool have everything to play for today at Gloucester. However, Oriel appear to be conceding, in a dress-rehearsal for their Pilkington Cup meeting next Saturday, they cannot sustain Sale, whose main danger is from not having played for four weeks.

□ Martin Bayfield, the England and British Isles lock forward, begins his comeback today from a ten-month lay-off with a chronic pelvic injury, in a second XV game for Northampton at home to Bath United.

TODAY'S TEAMS IN DUBLIN

IRELAND
C M P O'Shea (London Irish)
J A Topping (Ballymena)
J C Bell (Northampton)
M J Field (Malone)
D J Croft (Garryowen)
E P Elwood (Lansdowne)
N A Hogan (Tennent College)
N J Popplewell (Newcastle)
K G M Wood (Harlequins)
P S Wallace (Saracens)
D S Corkery (Bristol)
P S Johns (Saracens)
J W Davidson (London Irish)
W O McBride (Malone)
E R P Miller (Leicester)

FRANCE
J L Sadoouy (Colonniers)
E Ntamack (Toulouse)
S Glas (Bourgnon)
D Castaignède (Toulouse)
D Venditti (Brive)
A Penaud (Brive)
P Galtich (Colonniers)
C Galfano (Toulouse)
M Dalmazo (Agen)
F Tournaire (Narbonne)
A Benazzi (Agen)
O Merle (Montfermeil)
H Miorin (Toulouse)
P Benetton (Agen)
F Palous (Dax)

Preservation order put on British Lions

THE future of British Isles tours to the southern hemisphere has been confirmed by the International Rugby Football Board (IRFB), whose annual meeting ended in Dublin yesterday (David Hands writes). There is, though, a strong likelihood of an end to separate tours of New Zealand and Australia.

The Lions, who are expected to announce on Tuesday a leading sponsor for the tour to South Africa this summer, will continue on a four-yearly rotation but both the Australasian unions seek the variety they offer more regularly than once every 12 years. In the days of long tours the Lions used to visit Australia —

playing one or two internationals — as part of the build-up to New Zealand. Only in 1989 did Australia host their first full Lions tour.

Ray Williams, representing the four home unions, said: "There is a strong possibility that the Lions will play in both countries on one tour rather than splitting."

The IRFB has confirmed its wish that players should appear for only one country at senior international level. Although the legislation is not retrospective, and players serving the existing three-year stand-down period will not be affected, the dual international should be a thing of the past by the new millennium.

GRAB A FREE £10 BET

5 NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP

HANDICAP BETTING
Wales with a 4 point start

10/11 Scotland	14/1 Draw	Wales 10/11
7/2	1-5 pts	7/2
4/1	6-10 pts	6/1
6/1	11-15 pts	12/1
10/1	16-20 pts	25/1
20/1	21-25 pts	50/1

16/1 Drawn Match

HANDICAP BETTING
Ireland with a 9 point start

Evs Ireland	14/1 Draw	France 4/5
11/2	1-5 pts	11/2
9/1	6-10 pts	4/1
18/1	11-15 pts	5/1
33/1	16-20 pts	4/1
66/1	21-25 pts	8/1

16/1 Drawn Match

Winning Margin Betting margins off scratch. Other groups on request. Singles accepted. All William Hill Rugby rules apply.

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BADMINTON

TELFORD: General Accident under-17 team challenge. Denmark 5 England 2. Denmark 3 Sweden 2.

WIDNES: General Accident under-17 team challenge. Denmark 5 England 2. Denmark 3 Sweden 2.

BOWLS

LANGLIFF: Welsh Under-17 team challenge. Denmark 5 England 2. Denmark 3 Sweden 2.

CRICKET

SUPERSTAR SERIES: (See page 4) Lord's: Australia 10 England 8. (See page 4) Lord's: Australia 10 England 8.

FOOTBALL

PORTER'S CENTRAL LEAGUE: Premier League. Manchester City 1-0. (See page 4) Premier League. Manchester City 1-0.

ICE HOCKEY

SUPERLEAGUE: Manchester 3 Cardiff 1. (See page 4) Superleague. Manchester 3 Cardiff 1.

HOCKEY

LEVEN: Premier League. (See page 4) Leven. Premier League.

SKING

ZWISSEL: Women's World Cup. (See page 4) Zwiesel. Women's World Cup.

ROGUEY UNION

INTERNATIONAL MATCHES: (See page 4) International matches.

SHOOTER

BLACKPOOL: (See page 4) Blackpool.

FOR THE

FA YOUTH CUP: Third round. (See page 4) FA Youth Cup.

SPANISH CUP: Third round. (See page 4) Spanish Cup.

GOLF

INDIAN WELLS: (See page 4) Indian Wells.

ICE HOCKEY

SUPERLEAGUE: (See page 4) Superleague.

HOCKEY

LEVEN: (See page 4) Leven.

SKING

ZWISSEL: (See page 4) Zwiesel.

ROGUEY UNION

INTERNATIONAL MATCHES: (See page 4) International matches.

SHOOTER

BLACKPOOL: (See page 4) Blackpool.

RACING: TATE'S TALENTED PERFORMER TO REWARD BACKERS

Ask Tom can provide right answer for Kempton chase

BY RICHARD EVANS, RACING CORRESPONDENT

SINCE the mighty Desert Orchid won the first running of the Victor Chandler Chase, at 4-1, back in the 1989, the two-mile handicap has been a bonus for punters rather than the race's sponsor — and today's renewal can maintain the tradition.

In eight runnings, only two horses outside the first three in the betting have obliged and, while that trend is no reason for excluding outsiders from calculations, there are good reasons for opposing the long shots again today, when half the field is out of the handicap.

Exposing the chinks in a horse's armour is not always popular with owners, but it is important for punters in shortlisting possible winners. The much-hyped Calliope Bay is not a natural jumper of fences, and my guess is he never will be. The best of Kibreet's form last season would give him a chance, but he failed to justify odds-on favouritism in a three-runner

race behind Dancing Paddy at Cheltenham last time. The ten-year-old looks in the grip of the handicapper and is unlikely to find the necessary improvement at his age.

Dancing Paddy benefited from the small field last time and jumped better than usual. He can get rather low at some

RICHARD EVANS

Nap: ASK TOM
(3.10 Kempton Park)
Next best: Make A Stand
(2.40 Kempton Park)

fences and is likely to be found out in this more competitive event. Big Matt, the winner of this race last year when it was staged at its usual Ascot venue, has been disappointing this season and is definitely best at the Berkshire course.

The front-running Clay County, without a race for three months, is better giving

weight away to inferior rivals and may find this jump in class too much. This leaves the David Nicholson-trained pair, Viking Flagship and Storm Alert, and Ask Tom.

Interestingly, the Nicholson runners yesterday ran as if in need of their outings after the freeze. Leaving that aside, I suspect the admirable Viking Flagship would appreciate more cut and a little further, and may need this race after a six-week absence.

Storm Alert, an Ascot specialist, beat Ask Tom half a length at his favourite track four weeks ago and is only 1lb worse off, but I will be surprised if he can confirm the form here. Russ Garrity made the error of being slowly away on Ask Tom at Ascot and he is likely to be much nearer the pace today.

"We have not missed a day's work with him during the freeze. I have a lot of good grass gallops and I am happy with him," Tom Tate, his

trainer, said yesterday. The eight-year-old, whose only defeat over fences last season came in the Arkle when he was still suffering the effects of a virus, has "great ability" and is being aimed at the Queen Mother Champion Chase. With bags of improvement to come, Ask Tom looks a solid bet.

With a question mark against the fitness of so many runners, backers will need to exercise caution. Away from the gaze of the television cameras, it could pay to take on Ready Money Creek at Kempton (1.10) with Sea Victor, whose victory in a fast-race at Doncaster was boosted by the subsequent success of Endowment at Carlisle.

Those with good memories will recall Star Selection finishing sixth in the 1994 2,000 Guineas. Recently, he won a maiden hurdle at Hereford with minimal fuss and can follow up at Caterick (3.00) on his handicap debut.



Ask Tom, left, is fancied to get back on the winning trail in the Victor Chandler Handicap Chase at Kempton

Unguided Missile can strike target

HAYDOCK PARK

BBC1

1.15: Binsey is selected more in hope than confidence. Reg Akehurst's representative must take advantage of a favourable weight and his preferred ground to justify Champion Hurdle hopes. The seven-year-old made a race of it with Large Acron (give 5lb) last time when Pridwell finished well adrift after losing ground at the start. Pridwell is the form pick but is a notoriously difficult ride.

Dato Star appeared one-paced on a fast surface at Newcastle. Master Tribe, inclined to pull for his head, benefited from the strong pace in the Ladbrooke last week.

1.45: Unguided Missile is given a confident vote. The nine-year-old has improved with every outing; his failure to give 25lb to an on-song G. Ballistic last time was a noteworthy effort. He has won on his seasonal debut in the last three seasons, so the freeze should not have compromised him. Jodani was rated 9lb higher when successful at Kelso 13 months ago but this admirable chaser has become vulnerable to younger opponents. With Scotson Banks disappointing this term, Nahinen Lad looks the biggest danger, although he may require a greater stamina test.

2.15: Ocean Hawk will be a warm order after his tenacious Ascot victory. The five-year-old had six lengths in hand of Pleasure Shared that day and meets that rival on identical terms here. However, because each of his four victories have come on right-handed tracks, Pleasure Shared is preferred on this occasion. Top Spin, further behind the principals at Ascot, is better off here but his winning record is poor.

JULIAN MUSCAT



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THE TIMES GUIDE TO THE PREMIERSHIP THIS WEEKEND

ARSENAL

Arsenal's impressive FA Cup third-round replay victory at Sunderland on Wednesday proved that there is life after fan Wright, and, for that matter, John Hartson. It was one of those unusual games in which no Arsenal player was sent off, and Dennis Bergkamp, soon to be suspended himself, scored a remarkable goal. If Arsenal do manage to get Hristo Stoichkov, the combustible Bulgaria forward, on loan from Barcelona, who will drop out of the attack? **BG**

DERBY COUNTY

Jim Smith, the manager, was asked at the pre-season photocall whether the squad numbers allocated to his players gave a clue to his first choice XI. "No, but there is a lad at No 17 who is a certainty," Smith replied. Since then Matt Carlton has been pushed out of the side by Paul McGrath, but injuries to Stijnac and Yates have created a vacancy in the defence for the next month and Carlton plays at Chelsea today as Derby attempt to end a run of six matches without a win. **RH**

ASTON VILLA

With Villa's midfield riven by injuries — Taylor and Draper are out — Sasa Curcic, the disaffected Yugoslav, may return to the fold out of necessity against Liverpool this afternoon. "Something has clearly upset him," Brian Little, the manager, said. "I'm trying to get to the root of the problem and I've got a rough idea what it is. Hopefully, we'll get the whole thing sorted out soon." A physically fit and psychologically sound Curcic is vital if Villa are to survive at Anfield. **RK**

BLACKBURN ROVERS

Tony Parkes returned from Italy with the football equivalent of a school merit badge after visiting Sven Goran Eriksson, Blackburn's new manager. The Swede, in charge at Sampdoria, will not take control at Ewood Park until the end of the season, but he has given advice to the caretaker manager, as if it was needed. "He told us he was pleased with the way things are going, and to keep on the same," Parkes said. "We discussed transfer targets, but no one will be leaving." **DM**

CHELSEA

Roberto di Matteo had some encouraging words for Gianluca Vialli, his Italian compatriot, who seems likely to begin the game against Derby on the bench once more and is not pleased about it. But while Hughes and Zola have unquestionably struck up a fine partnership in attack, Zola has been man-marked out of the game on too many occasions. Ruddock, the manager, says that this should give more space to the other players, but, in practice, that has not been happening. **BG**

COVENTRY CITY

Callers to Highfield Road early on Wednesday, before the FA Cup tie against Woking, were told there was no problem with the pitch and that no inspection was planned. Cue mass exodus from Surrey. 27 coaches on an ultimately fruitless trek. Gerald Ashby, the referee, also rang the club and yet, despite being informed that all was well, he felt he had no option, an hour before kick-off, but to postpone the game. How much blame were Coventry willing to accept? Correct. Not a frozen sausage. **RK**

EVERTON

Claus Thomsen, Everton's new signing from Ipswich, will make his debut tomorrow. Where is another matter. "Could be midfield, it could be at centre-back, or as one of a back three, depending on how we play," Joe Royle, the manager, said yesterday. Everton's injury list is showing few signs of improving, with Ebbrell and Parkinson still missing. Short was able to train, however, and with Watson, Barrett and Unsworth back in contention, Dunne may step down. **PB**

LEEDS UNITED

Tony Yeboah's days at Elland Road appear to be numbered. Controversially, he turned out for Ghana last weekend despite being unfit for Leeds. After his return on Thursday he declared himself unfit to take part in a practice game with Scarborough. Haile, Moleenar and Palmer all played and will return at West Ham after missing the cup-tie at Crystal Palace. Lee Sharpe also played, scoring the goal in a 1-0 win, but Dorigo is again troubled by a hamstring injury. **PB**

LEICESTER CITY

Martin O'Neill, the manager, is likely to make further additions to his squad next week having signed Matt Elliott, a central defender, from Oxford United for £1.6 million, a club record, two days ago. "If he was going to be impressed it was with the number of players I said I wanted to bring in," O'Neill said. Elliott makes his debut against Wimbledon today but Steve Walsh, recovered from a hernia operation, now requires surgery on his knee and is out for three more weeks. **RH**

LIVERPOOL

Roy Evans, the manager, has something of a headache as he ponders a game that will have a big impact on the positions at the top of the table. John Barnes, Neil Ruddock and Phil Babb are injured and Michael Thomas suspended. It means Jamie Redknapp returns after a month-long exile through injury, and the young Jamie Carragher, 19, will make his full debut. Liverpool must return to winning ways at home if they are to secure their first championship in seven years. **DM**

MANCHESTER UNITED

After the failures of their three-man central defence against Tottenham, United are likely to resume normal service at Coventry today. Irwin returns to play at left back, with Johnsen and Pallister likely to play as centre backs, after both trained all week. Nicky Butt is missing from the midfield again, but Philip Neville is back after a bout of glandular fever. "I feel as if there's nothing wrong with me," he said, although he is still wearing a heart monitor during training. **PB**

MIDDLESBROUGH

Acutely aware that his side have managed just one win in their last 16 league games, Bryan Robson, the manager, gambles with the inclusion of two new signings, Italian centre half Gianluca Festa and Slovakian left back Vladimir Kijer, against Sheffield Wednesday today. Seven points adrift at the foot of the table after having three points deducted for failing to fulfil their December 21 fixture at Blackburn, Robson's men are in desperate need of victory. **DM**

NEWCASTLE UNITED

If Kenny Dalglish needed any confirmation of the scale of his first official day in charge, Dalglish called an informal meeting of the local media to discuss access arrangements. On his first full day as Blackburn, three reporters turned up and even the local evening newspaper man didn't bother. Yesterday, though, Dalglish waded through a scrum of fans to be greeted by the expectant faces of at least 40 members of the media. Welcome to the goldfish bowl. **DM**

NOTTINGHAM FOREST

The proposed takeover remains as foggy as ever, but under the caretaker management of Stuart Pearce, the existing squad may be good enough to keep Forest in the Premiership after all, subject to the permanent signing of Nigel Clough. This week, the only suggestion that problems lie ahead was made by Nigel's dad, who doubts whether Pearce can carry his huge workload for more than six weeks. "Anything longer than that and I will doubt his sanity," Clough Sr. said. **RH**

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

Mark Bright will leave Wednesday in a £80,000 move to the Swiss club Sion this week. It comes as no surprise: Bright has been at odds with David Pleat, the manager, for some time. Back into the squad comes Wayne Collins, the summer signing from Crewe Alexandra whose injury early in the season coincided with the club's dramatic slump in form. The return of Collins has given Pleat hope that Wednesday can push themselves into contention at the right end of the table. **DM**

SUNDERLAND

Sunderland have lost Sam Allardyce, their youth development officer, who has been appointed manager of Notts County. Meanwhile Lionel Perez, the French goalkeeper, aims to end the interest shown by Peter Reid, the manager, in Shay Given, the Blackburn reserve goalkeeper, by impressing against the visitors from Ewood Park today. Jan Eriksson, newly signed from Sweden, is expected to make his debut in central defence while Alex Rae and Martin Smith are poised to return. **DM**

HOW THEY STAND

	Pts	Goal diff	Last five
1. Liverpool	23	+18	DDWLD
2. Manchester Utd	22	+18	WWWDW
3. Arsenal	22	+18	DDWW
4. Newcastle	22	+18	DDWLD
5. Wimbledon	20	+10	WWLWD
6. Aston Villa	20	+10	WLDLD
7. Chelsea	20	+10	WWDLW
8. Sheffield Wed	21	+10	DDWLD
9. Everton	22	+10	DDWLD
10. Tottenham	21	+10	DDWLD
11. Sunderland	22	+10	DDWLD
12. Leeds	22	+10	DDWLD
13. Derby	21	+10	DDWLD
14. Blackburn	21	+10	DDWLD
15. Coventry	22	+10	DDWLD
16. Leicester	21	+10	DDWLD
17. West Ham	21	+10	DDWLD
18. Nottm Forest	22	+10	DDWLD
19. Southampton	21	+10	DDWLD
20. Middlesbrough	22	+10	DDWLD

SOUTHAMPTON

Beral and Slater begin suspensions today, but Dryden could return after injury and Le Tissier may be in the starting line-up as Southampton look forward, with good reason, to the visit of Newcastle United, who have lost all three of their games at The Dell since returning to the Premiership. Graeme Souness, the manager, telephoned Kenny Dalglish, his former Liverpool and Scotland team-mate, earlier in the week to wish him good luck — but only from tomorrow onwards. **NS**

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Tottenham have played only twice this year, losing to Manchester United in league and cup, yet have showed a few signs of possible recovery. "If we can get a good run together, we can still qualify for Europe," Colin Calderwood, the Scotland defender, said. The club yesterday announced plans to install a second "jumbotron" screen at White Hart Lane, in the North Stand, which should at least give the fans another perspective on how the team is performing. **RK**

WEST HAM UNITED

West Ham have described as "absolute nonsense" reports that they lost £1 million on Raduciu's return to Espanol, although they admit to being out of pocket, as they were on the recent sale of Dumitrescu. Despite having suffered so badly with his foreign signings, Harry Redknapp, the manager, is still thought to rate Pierre van Hooijdonk, Celtic's Dutch striker, above Dean Holdsworth, of Wimbledon, as he continues his search for a goalscorer. **KP**

WIMBLEDON

Ekoku and Kimble are under treatment for the visit to Leicester, as is Gayle, who missed the match at Crewe Alexandra on Tuesday, where remarks by Joe Kinnear about Paul Danson, the referee, were an untypical blast from the past, according to Terry Burton, his assistant. "Joe has calmed himself down. We thought we were unfairly treated last season, but Joe realises now that things have to be said through the right channels," he said. **NS**

Reports: Brian Glenville, Peter Ball, Russell Kempson, Richard Holson, Nick Szepanski, Keith Piles, David Macdonald, Statistic: Julian Deabourgh



CHELSEA v DERBY COUNTY

TICKETS: Sold out
10-YEAR RECORD: 1-0, 1-1, 2-1, 2-2, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, 3-7, 3-8, 3-9, 3-10, 3-11, 3-12, 3-13, 3-14, 3-15, 3-16, 3-17, 3-18, 3-19, 3-20, 3-21, 3-22, 3-23, 3-24, 3-25, 3-26, 3-27, 3-28, 3-29, 3-30, 3-31, 3-32, 3-33, 3-34, 3-35, 3-36, 3-37, 3-38, 3-39, 3-40, 3-41, 3-42, 3-43, 3-44, 3-45, 3-46, 3-47, 3-48, 3-49, 3-50, 3-51, 3-52, 3-53, 3-54, 3-55, 3-56, 3-57, 3-58, 3-59, 3-60, 3-61, 3-62, 3-63, 3-64, 3-65, 3-66, 3-67, 3-68, 3-69, 3-70, 3-71, 3-72, 3-73, 3-74, 3-75, 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79, 3-80, 3-81, 3-82, 3-83, 3-84, 3-85, 3-86, 3-87, 3-88, 3-89, 3-90, 3-91, 3-92, 3-93, 3-94, 3-95, 3-96, 3-97, 3-98, 3-99, 3-100, 3-101, 3-102, 3-103, 3-104, 3-105, 3-106, 3-107, 3-108, 3-109, 3-110, 3-111, 3-112, 3-113, 3-114, 3-115, 3-116, 3-117, 3-118, 3-119, 3-120, 3-121, 3-122, 3-123, 3-124, 3-125, 3-126, 3-127, 3-128, 3-129, 3-130, 3-131, 3-132, 3-133, 3-134, 3-135, 3-136, 3-137, 3-138, 3-139, 3-140, 3-141, 3-142, 3-143, 3-144, 3-145, 3-146, 3-147, 3-148, 3-149, 3-150, 3-151, 3-152, 3-153, 3-154, 3-155, 3-156, 3-157, 3-158, 3-159, 3-160, 3-161, 3-162, 3-163, 3-164, 3-165, 3-166, 3-167, 3-168, 3-169, 3-170, 3-171, 3-172, 3-173, 3-174, 3-175, 3-176, 3-177, 3-178, 3-179, 3-180, 3-181, 3-182, 3-183, 3-184, 3-185, 3-186, 3-187, 3-188, 3-189, 3-190, 3-191, 3-192, 3-193, 3-194, 3-195, 3-196, 3-197, 3-198, 3-199, 3-200, 3-201, 3-202, 3-203, 3-204, 3-205, 3-206, 3-207, 3-208, 3-209, 3-210, 3-211, 3-212, 3-213, 3-214, 3-215, 3-216, 3-217, 3-218, 3-219, 3-220, 3-221, 3-222, 3-223, 3-224, 3-225, 3-226, 3-227, 3-228, 3-229, 3-230, 3-231, 3-232, 3-233, 3-234, 3-235, 3-236, 3-237, 3-238, 3-239, 3-240, 3-241, 3-242, 3-243, 3-244, 3-245, 3-246, 3-247, 3-248, 3-249, 3-250, 3-251, 3-252, 3-253, 3-254, 3-255, 3-256, 3-257, 3-258, 3-259, 3-260, 3-261, 3-262, 3-263, 3-264, 3-265, 3-266, 3-267, 3-268, 3-269, 3-270, 3-271, 3-272, 3-273, 3-274, 3-275, 3-276, 3-277, 3-278, 3-279, 3-280, 3-281, 3-282, 3-283, 3-284, 3-285, 3-286, 3-287, 3-288, 3-289, 3-290, 3-291, 3-292, 3-293, 3-294, 3-295, 3-296, 3-297, 3-298, 3-299, 3-300, 3-301, 3-302, 3-303, 3-304, 3-305, 3-306, 3-307, 3-308, 3-309, 3-310, 3-311, 3-312, 3-313, 3-314, 3-315, 3-316, 3-317, 3-318, 3-319, 3-320, 3-321, 3-322, 3-323, 3-324, 3-325, 3-326, 3-327, 3-328, 3-329, 3-330, 3-331, 3-332, 3-333, 3-334, 3-335, 3-336, 3-337, 3-338, 3-339, 3-340, 3-341, 3-342, 3-343, 3-344, 3-345, 3-346, 3-347, 3-348, 3-349, 3-350, 3-351, 3-352, 3-353, 3-354, 3-355, 3-356, 3-357, 3-358, 3-359, 3-360, 3-361, 3-362, 3-363, 3-364, 3-365, 3-366, 3-367, 3-368, 3-369, 3-370, 3-371, 3-372, 3-373, 3-374, 3-375, 3-376, 3-377, 3-378, 3-379, 3-380, 3-381, 3-382, 3-383, 3-384, 3-385, 3-386, 3-387, 3-388, 3-389, 3-390, 3-391, 3-392, 3-393, 3-394, 3-395, 3-396, 3-397, 3-398, 3-399, 3-400, 3-401, 3-402, 3-403, 3-404, 3-405, 3-406, 3-407, 3-408, 3-409, 3-410, 3-411, 3-412, 3-413, 3-414, 3-415, 3-416, 3-417, 3-418, 3-419, 3-420, 3-421, 3-422, 3-423, 3-424, 3-425, 3-426, 3-427, 3-428, 3-429, 3-430, 3-431, 3-432, 3-433, 3-434, 3-435, 3-436, 3-437, 3-438, 3-439, 3-440, 3-441, 3-442, 3-443, 3-444, 3-445, 3-446, 3-447, 3-448, 3-449, 3-450, 3-451, 3-452, 3-453, 3-454, 3-455, 3-456, 3-457, 3-458, 3-459, 3-460, 3-461, 3-462, 3-463, 3-464, 3-465, 3-466, 3-467, 3-468, 3-469, 3-470, 3-471, 3-472, 3-473, 3-474, 3-475, 3-476, 3-477, 3-478, 3-479, 3-480, 3-481, 3-482, 3-483, 3-484, 3-485, 3-486, 3-487, 3-488, 3-489, 3-490, 3-491, 3-492, 3-493, 3-494, 3-495, 3-496, 3-497, 3-498, 3-499, 3-500, 3-501, 3-502, 3-503, 3-504, 3-505, 3-506, 3-507, 3-508, 3-509, 3-510, 3-511, 3-512, 3-513, 3-514, 3-515, 3-516, 3-517, 3-518, 3-519, 3-520, 3-521, 3-522, 3-523, 3-524, 3-525, 3-526, 3-527, 3-528, 3-529, 3-530, 3-531, 3-532, 3-533, 3-534, 3-535, 3-536, 3-537, 3-538, 3-539, 3-540, 3-541, 3-542, 3-543, 3-544, 3-545, 3-546, 3-547, 3-548, 3-549, 3-550, 3-551, 3-552, 3-553, 3-554, 3-555, 3-556, 3-557, 3-558, 3-559, 3-560, 3-561, 3-562, 3-563, 3-564, 3-565, 3-566, 3-567, 3-568, 3-569, 3-570, 3-571, 3-572, 3-573, 3-574, 3-575, 3-576, 3-577, 3-578, 3-579, 3-580, 3-581, 3-582, 3-583, 3-584, 3-585, 3-586, 3-587, 3-588, 3-589, 3-590, 3-591, 3-592, 3-593, 3-594, 3-595, 3-596, 3-597, 3-598, 3-599, 3-600, 3-601, 3-602, 3-603, 3-604, 3-605, 3-606, 3-607, 3-608, 3-609, 3-610, 3-611, 3-612, 3-613, 3-614, 3-615, 3-616, 3-617, 3-618, 3-619, 3-620, 3-621, 3-622, 3-623, 3-624, 3-625, 3-626, 3-627, 3-628, 3-629, 3-630, 3-631, 3-632, 3-633, 3-634, 3-635, 3-636, 3-637, 3-638, 3-639, 3-640, 3-641, 3-642, 3-643, 3-644, 3-645, 3-646, 3-647, 3-648, 3-649, 3-650, 3-651, 3-652, 3-653, 3-654, 3-655, 3-656, 3-657, 3-658, 3-659, 3-660, 3-661, 3-662, 3-663, 3-664, 3-665, 3-666, 3-667, 3-668, 3-669, 3-670, 3-671, 3-672, 3-673, 3-674, 3-675, 3-676, 3-677, 3-678, 3-679, 3-680, 3-681, 3-682, 3-683, 3-684, 3-685, 3-686, 3-687, 3-688, 3-689, 3-690, 3-691, 3-692, 3-693, 3-694, 3-695, 3-696, 3-697, 3-698, 3-699, 3-700, 3-701, 3-702, 3-703, 3-704, 3-705, 3-706, 3-707, 3-708, 3-709, 3-710, 3-711, 3-712, 3-713, 3-714, 3-715, 3-716, 3-717, 3-718, 3-719, 3-720, 3-721, 3-722, 3-723, 3-724, 3-725, 3-726, 3-727, 3-728, 3-729, 3-730, 3-731, 3-732, 3-733, 3-734, 3-735, 3-736, 3-737, 3-738, 3-739, 3-740, 3-741, 3-742, 3-743, 3-744, 3-745, 3-746, 3-747, 3-748, 3-749, 3-750, 3-751, 3-752, 3-753, 3-754, 3-755, 3-756, 3-757, 3-758, 3-759, 3-760, 3-761, 3-762, 3-763, 3-764, 3-765, 3-766, 3-767, 3-768, 3-769, 3-770, 3-771, 3-772, 3-773, 3-774, 3-775, 3-776, 3-777, 3-778, 3-779, 3-780, 3-781, 3-782, 3-783, 3-784, 3-785, 3-786, 3-787, 3-788, 3-789, 3-790, 3-791, 3-792, 3-793, 3-794, 3-795, 3-796, 3-797, 3-798, 3-799, 3-800, 3-801, 3-802, 3-803, 3-804, 3-805, 3-806, 3-807, 3-808, 3-809, 3-810, 3-811, 3-812, 3-813, 3-814, 3-815, 3-816, 3-817, 3-818, 3-819, 3-820, 3-821, 3-822, 3-823, 3-824, 3-825, 3-826, 3-827, 3-828, 3-829, 3-830, 3-831, 3-832, 3-833, 3-834, 3-835, 3-836, 3-837, 3-838, 3-839, 3-840, 3-841, 3-842, 3-843, 3-844, 3-845, 3-846, 3-847, 3-848, 3-849, 3-850, 3-851, 3-852, 3-853, 3-854, 3-855, 3-856, 3-857, 3-858, 3-859, 3-860, 3-861, 3-862, 3-863, 3-864, 3-865, 3-866, 3-867, 3-868, 3-869, 3-870, 3-871, 3-872, 3-873, 3-874, 3-875, 3-876, 3-877, 3-878, 3-879, 3-880, 3-881, 3-882, 3-883, 3-884, 3-885, 3-886, 3-887, 3-888, 3-889, 3-890, 3-891, 3-892, 3-893, 3-894, 3-895, 3-896, 3-897, 3-898, 3-899, 3-900, 3-901, 3-902, 3-903, 3-904, 3-905, 3-906, 3-907, 3-908, 3-909, 3-910, 3-911, 3-912, 3-913, 3-914, 3-915, 3-916, 3-917, 3-918, 3-919, 3-920, 3-921, 3-922, 3-923, 3-924, 3-925, 3-926, 3-927, 3-928, 3-929, 3-930, 3-931, 3-932, 3-933, 3-934, 3-935, 3-936, 3-937, 3-938, 3-939, 3-940, 3-941, 3-942, 3-943, 3-944, 3-945, 3-946, 3-947, 3-948, 3-949, 3-950, 3-951, 3-952, 3-953, 3-954, 3-955, 3-956, 3-957, 3-958, 3-959, 3-960, 3-961, 3-962, 3-963, 3-964, 3-965, 3-966, 3-967, 3-968, 3-969, 3-970, 3-971, 3-972, 3-973, 3-974, 3-975, 3-976, 3-977, 3-978, 3-979, 3-980, 3-981, 3-982, 3-983, 3-984, 3-985, 3-986, 3-987, 3-988, 3-989, 3-990, 3-991, 3-992, 3-993, 3-994, 3-995, 3-996, 3-997, 3-998, 3-999, 4-000, 4-001, 4-002, 4-003, 4-004, 4-005, 4-006, 4-007, 4-008, 4-009, 4-010, 4-011, 4-012, 4-013, 4-014, 4-015, 4-016, 4-017, 4-018, 4-019, 4-020, 4-021, 4-022, 4-023, 4-024, 4-025, 4-026, 4-027, 4-028, 4-029, 4-030, 4-031, 4-032, 4-033, 4-034, 4-035, 4-036, 4-037, 4-038, 4-039, 4-040, 4-041, 4-042, 4-043, 4-044, 4-045, 4-046, 4-047, 4-048, 4-049, 4-050, 4-051, 4-052, 4-053, 4-054, 4-055, 4-056, 4-057, 4-058, 4-059, 4-060, 4-061, 4-062, 4-063, 4-064, 4-065, 4-066, 4-067, 4-068, 4-069, 4-070, 4-071, 4-072, 4-073, 4-074, 4-075, 4-076, 4-077, 4-078, 4-079, 4-080, 4-081, 4-082, 4-083, 4-084, 4-085, 4-086, 4-087, 4-088, 4-089, 4-090, 4-091, 4-092, 4-093, 4-094, 4-095, 4-096, 4-097, 4



Ravanelli celebrates scoring for his beloved Juventus in typically ecstatic fashion. He may return to Italy after his unhappy exile in England. Photograph: Dusan Vranic

Ravanelli poised to bolt again

Fabrizio Ravanelli exploded again this week. Middlesbrough were doomed. Relegation was coming. There was no hope of salvation. It was all truly tragic. Just as it had been, for somewhat different reasons, when he left Juventus last July.

Come un fulmine dal cielo, sereno (like a bolt from the blue), Ravanelli used the phrase twice in his torrid and dramatic summer of 1996. The first time somewhat self-indulgently, the second with good reason.

The first occasion came with the Italy team at the start of the European championship. Ravanelli was trailing clouds of glory — even if the clouds would prove to lack a silver lining. He it was, after all, who had scored the Juventus goal the previous month in Rome's Olympic Stadium, in the European Cup final against Ajax. Scored it with an extraordinary shot from the sharpest of angles, after a blunder in the Dutch defence.

He arrived in England — where he would soon, so unexpectedly, return — with an injury to his Achilles tendon. He was clearly unfit to play in the opening match against Russia and Arrigo Sacchi, the Italy manager, left him out, provoking Ravanelli's irrational outburst. How could they do this to him?

In the event, with Russia beaten, Sacchi, surely against his better judgment, brought on Ravanelli as a late substitute. Twice Ravanelli had chances to increase Italy's lead, twice he failed. There seemed no way he could be picked for the second game, against the Czechs, in Manchester.

but he was. Could Sacchi have been intimidated? He made five unforced changes. Ravanelli struggled again, and the Italians lost. Out they went.

Early in July, Ravanelli was at home in his native Perugia, where he had begun his career, preparing to go on holiday. Suddenly, he was summoned to Turin by Juventus, to be told by Roberto Benigni, himself a former Juve star and now vice president, that he would be transferred to Middlesbrough for £7 million. Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, was there. It was the second time Ravanelli had been struck by a bolt from the blue.

In the midst of his embittered lamentations, he might have reflected that his fate was sealed in the 77th minute of that European Cup final. It was then that Marcello Lippi, Juve's manager, with whom Ravanelli had often had his ups and downs, decided to substitute him.

With words and insulting gestures, Ravanelli made his feelings known. "He told Lippi to go to hell once too often," an Italian critic wrote.

Ravanelli was now distraught. "I'd be a hypocrite if I said I wasn't sorry," he said. "I am very distressed. I'm Juventus through to my soul, so you can understand my state of mind at the moment. It's terrible. They chuck me out like someone who isn't any use. I understood they had no more faith in me. And I know whom to thank." Obviously, Marcello Lippi. "I doubt it. I was a point of reference for Juve," he said. "I feel betrayed, as a professional and as a man. I never thought for a moment Juve could give up someone like me."

FABRIZIO RAVANELLI

THE FACE OF FOOTBALL



By Brian Glanville

Not just that. When Gianluca Vialli left to join Chelsea, I felt sorry — but also a touch of pride. I told myself they'd make me captain. I was living in another world.

Still, there was Robson — and there was the money. Perhaps not as much as the reputed £42,000 a week but infinitely more than the £350,000 a year he was getting from Juventus. Of Robson, he said: "He enchanted me. A man of great charisma."

The enchantment, as we know, did not endure. Just a few weeks ago, on Italian television, Ravanelli was letting fly at what he perceived as the inadequacies of Middlesbrough's training. British footballers, he sneered, could run and run, but had

no idea how to accelerate at the right time. As for his own training, he had to ask Juventus for regular programmes, to stay in shape.

Italian football journalists would hardly have been surprised; they were well used to Ravanelli's outbursts, not least when things went wrong at Juventus and he found himself in camp with the Italy team. "When things go well, he's fine," says a Turin sports journalist, "but he can't take criticism of any kind."

A psychological quirk, a basic lack of self-confidence, or a consequence of Ravanelli's hard early years as a professional? Who can say. Certainly his path to the top was not easy.

Italian clubs will pick up promising players as young as 13. Ravanelli, by contrast, slugged away for years in the lower divisions. Perugia are now a Serie A club, but not when he played for them. He was powerful and brave, but far from the alert, sophisticated, intelligent player he would in time become.

He had three seasons in the third division with Perugia, who sold him to Avellino. Ravanelli could not settle in the southern town and, to the ire of the Serie B club, left for another third division season with Casertana. He was improving all the time, however, and when he moved to Reggina, in Serie B, he took off. So much so that, in 1992, when he was 23, Juventus bought him.

Merely as a reserve, it was supposed, but injuries to men like Vialli gave him his chance and he surprised Juve with his dynamic form. In his four seasons there, he scored 41 goals in the championship, five against

CSKA Sofia in a single Uefa Cup game, plus the goal that helped to win the European Cup.

Nicknamed La Penna Bianca (the White Feather) for his prematurely white hair, he is a modest, emotional, impulsive man and his celebration — shirt pulled over his head after scoring — became famous.

Today he plays for Middlesbrough against Sheffield Wednesday and next Wednesday he will expect to be in Italy's attack against Northern Ireland in Palermo, under the new management of Cesare Maldini.

A year ago, against Wales on a flooded pitch in Terni that he deemed unplayable, Ravanelli put on an astonishing exhibition of strength and skill, scoring one goal, making another. He talked endlessly, delighted not only by his performance, but by the fact that he had brought a hostile crowd on to his side.

Resentful of a star who came from nearby Perugia, the fans initially jeered him. By the end, they were not whistling but cheering him. "I felt an emotion of incredible intensity," he said. "The real fans shouted 'Clowns!' to those on the terraces. I reacted and increased my efforts a hundredfold. If I was already feeling good, from then on, I felt great."

Just as he did when he began his Premiership career at Middlesbrough with a hat-trick against Liverpool. Since then, he has had a sure egg of a season, like the team itself. Meanwhile, it seems most unlikely he will be on Tyneside next season. He wants to go back to Juventus, but would Marcello Lippi wear it?

Beer match that left captain in the lurch

IF YOU want to get thrown out of Sydney Cricket Ground, you have got to do something pretty good. "I know nothing about urinating," Jason Taylor, captain of North Sydney Bears rugby league team, said. "But there was an incident with some tomato sauce where the blokes rubbed it into one another. Some of the sauce got on a bloke's T-shirt. He got upset and I can understand that."

"A bloke three rows back threw some beer over me. I shouldn't have reacted, but I stood up. When I did so the crowd started shouting out my name. That prompted the security guards and they said I had to go." It was all a misunderstanding, you see. "It looked terrible on TV, like I'd been drinking and spilling beer all over myself all night." Perish la pensée. "I regret now I went to the cricket," Taylor has been told by the local Wyong council that his services as Australia Day ambassador will no longer be required tomorrow week.

SIMON BARNES



On Saturday

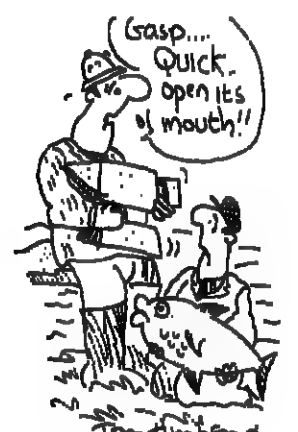
turned up again. Barlow, 80, confirms his veracity and Hayes's catch has been struck from the records. Hayes said: "Well, I've held the record for 41 years and had my fun. I won't lose any sleep over it."

All that glitters

What means more to Australia than its proud traditions? Manly sport, patriotism, beating the Poms, beating the world? Does anything matter more than these things? Only money. The Australian Rugby Union (ARU) has decided to ditch that proud and ancient symbol of the golden jumper, worn during 30 years of adventuring across the world of rugby union. The ARU has done a deal worth Aus\$6 million with Reebok, under which Reebok can muck it up all they like. The new jersey is a gaudy flashy mess with green-and-white flashes on a gold background. "It maintains the intrinsic and much-loved green and predominantly gold and I believe retains the great traditions of Australian rugby," Jon O'Neill, the ARU chief executive, said. Well, England's own Rugby Football Union won't be selling out like that this year. They sold out years ago. The surprising thing is that Australia was prepared to sell the moral high ground over the Poms for such a small sum.

Waugh at a loss

I would like you all to join with me in mourning the sadness of Steve Waugh, that most likeable of Australian cricketers. He has managed to set a record for Australia cricket: he has taken part in 11 consecutive one-day defeats. It began with the pasting from (tee-hee) Sri Lanka, in the Singer Cup, in September. Waugh then missed two wins over West Indies with a groin strain, but rejoined the side in time for five defeats in India. Then followed the gimmicky World Series Cup in Australia and Waugh was there for five more defeats against Pakistan and West Indies. Australia — how one grieves — therefore miss out on the World Series final for the first time in 17 years. "I'm well aware of it," Waugh said when asked about his achievement. "When teams get into the habit of losing, it's hard to get out of it." Some English people have noticed that too, actually.



Playing the joker

I read that the pyrotechnical Bulgarian footballer, Hristo Stoichkov, is to join Arsenal. Be warned: Stoichkov, besides having an on-pitch presence that makes Eric Cantona look shy and tentative, is a practical joker of some cruelty. His colleague at Barcelona, the Brazilian, Ronaldo, was rudely awakened from his slumbers by one of the directors and asked why he was not at training. Stoichkov had told him training was scheduled for the afternoon. Ronaldo, not Stoichkov, was fined. Mark Twain once said that "a German joke is no laughing matter": the same is clearly true of Bulgarian jokes.

Footing the bill

Zambia is the world's most beautiful country and Zambian football remains a symbol of hope in a naughty world. I learn that 12 players from Power Dynamics of Kitwe have gone on strike. They will not train until they get their boots back. Club officials took away the boots they wear for training, promising new kit in time for the opening of the season in March. The players refuse to train in bare feet. How much did Newcastle United pay for Alan Shearer?

Fisherman's tale

Time for a fish story. One of the most ancient and revered records in American fishing lore is the 41-year-old mark for the smallmouth bass. The poor beast was yanked out of Dale Hollow Reservoir, Kentucky, in 1955 by Dave Hayes and it weighed an amazing 11lb 15oz. But now an affidavit from his guide on the occasion, John Barlow, has come to light. Barlow, it seems, stuffed 3lb of lead weights into the fish before it was officially weighed. But he felt guilty afterwards and filed the affidavit — which was promptly ignored by the reservoir overseers. Now it has

Dalglish's comeback turns old friends into foes

By DAVID MADDOCK

THE most interesting, and indeed significant, contests of the day in the FA Carling Premiership are linked not only by their bearing on affairs at the business end of the table, but by the relationship between the protagonists. Kenny Dalglish hardly needs any more spice added to his first match officially in control of Newcastle United but, against Southampton, he finds himself in direct opposition to Graeme Souness, an old friend from their playing

days together at Liverpool and the man who succeeded him as manager at Anfield.

To complete the trilogy, Roy Evans, the present Liverpool manager, entertains Aston Villa in what is indisputably the match of the day. The theme, from all three — and from Villa for that matter — is that victory is imperative.

Southampton's ambitions are those of survival, but Liverpool, Newcastle and Villa all know that defeat could undermine any pretensions they have of succeeding the ominously strong Manchester

United as champions. It was a subject Evans dwelt on as he analysed the title contest.

"Aston Villa are right up there in contention for the title. They can have a big influence on it's outcome," he said. "It is a difficult game because they are direct rivals and a win for either side would be important. But really, we have got to stop thinking of it as a game against rivals."

"What we have to do is concentrate on our own results and forget about the rest. We have to start winning our own points. We have been lucky

really, because we have stayed top largely because of other people's results. They have dropped points to keep us in it. But now we really have to start putting our own house in order. We have to win matches and that means this game is doubly significant."

Liverpool have struggled to win matches of late, especially at home, and if their house is not put in order soon, it might fall down around Evans's ears.

The same could be said of Newcastle, if not Dalglish. He is under no pressure to win

anything at all this season but, if he does so, he will be immediately regarded as the returning messiah by the St James' faithful. He is, in football parlance, on a winner. Newcastle, though, really cannot afford to lose many more games between now and the end of the season. Six defeats is generally regarded as the absolute maximum, even in as bizarre a season as this, and they have reached that mark already.

Dalglish recognises that the absence of pressure could be significant. "I don't think the

ambitions, the expectations here are greater than at half a dozen clubs," he said. "In fact, I think the fans are, if anything, more forgiving than most. If we can learn to relax a little more, then we are capable of doing a lot better. We can try to realise everyone's greatest ambition."

That may be the same old Dalglish, more in tune than straight talk, but victory this afternoon could yet suggest that it will be the same old Dalglish at the end of the season — holding aloft a championship trophy.

BOXING

Brown has capability to revive world claims

NEVILLE BROWN, of Burton-on-Trent, can underline his case for another world title challenge tonight when he meets Willie Quinn, of Edinburgh, ranked No 3 by the World Boxing Organisation (WBO), in Swadlincote (Sikumar Sen writes).

Brown last boxed for a world title ten months ago. He moved up to super-middleweight to challenge Steve Collins, of Ireland, but was stopped in 11 rounds. Brown has not boxed since then but, as he is coming down to middleweight to defend his British title against Quinn, he will be meeting an opponent who is more his size.

Brown is far more skilful than Quinn and also carries an explosive punch. He should stop the Scot by the

middle of the bout. Quinn's chin has not let him down as a professional, but when he was an amateur he was stopped in one round by Robin Reid, of Runcorn, who is now the World Boxing Council super-middleweight champion.

At 24, Quinn is six years younger than the champion, but is hoping to catch him on the chin, which has looked vulnerable so many times. Brown can, however, take comfort from the fact that so far Quinn has not revealed the kind of punch needed to put him on the floor.

Quinn, too, has not boxed for ten months, but he has prepared himself well because, as WBO No 3, he knows he will move closer to a world title challenge if he gets the verdict over Brown.

SPORT IN BRIEF

THE Italian, Deborah Compagnoni, gained her first giant slalom victory of the skiing season in Zwiesel, Germany yesterday, finishing 11sec ahead of Anita Wachter, of Austria.

Pernilla Wiberg, of Sweden, finished third, to stretch her World Cup lead over the defending champion, Katja Seizinger, of Germany, who fell, by 60 points to 274.

RUGBY LEAGUE: Bobbie Goulding was last night called into the Great Britain squad for the World Nines in Townsville, Australia, from January 31 to February 2. He will replace Keiron Cunningham, his colleague at St Helens.

SAILING: Ben Ainslie, Great Britain's Olympic silver medal-winner in the Laser class, flew to Rio de Janeiro yesterday, where he is to sail in the Brazilian

national championships. He will take on Robert Scheidt, who pipped him for gold in Atlanta.

MOTOR RALLYING: Colin McRae begins his attempt to recapture the world championship at the Monte Carlo Rally tomorrow. The 1995 world champion will contest all 14 rounds of the championship in his Subaru Impreza.

BOXING: Evander Holyfield may receive \$40 million (about £23.5 million) for a rematch with Mike Tyson, who he beat to take the World Boxing Association heavyweight title, at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas on May 3.

SKIING: Adrien Duval, of France, was in a coma last night after a crash during training for the World Cup downhill today.

HOCKEY

Teddington bolstered by return of Laslett

JASON LASLETT, Great Britain's Olympic captain, resumes duty with Teddington today as the National League emerges from its winter break (Sydney Friskin writes). He played in the first match of the season last September and then decided to have a rest.

In the twice postponed match against Southgate, Laslett will be one of the key figures for Teddington, who have two new Australian players in their squad, Guthrie and Read.

Southgate, holding third place in the premier division and with the prospect of another home match against Guildford tomorrow, are hoping to make ground on Cannock, the leaders. Several Southgate players, however, have recently taken hard

knocks. Soma Singh twisted an ankle in the Los Reyes tournament in Barcelona and Duthie may not have fully recovered from a shoulder injury suffered earlier.

Cannock entertain Old Loughtonians, who are six points behind and desperate to make up the leeway.

The absence of Halls, who is still serving a disciplinary ban, imposes heavier burdens on Morrison and Robinson in Old Loughtonians' defence. East Grinstead are at full strength for their home fixture against Reading.

Paddy Selman, a former international hockey umpire, died in hospital at Worthing on Monday, aged 82. He was one of the umpires in the first World Cup tournament, in Barcelona in 1971.

SNOW REPORTS

	Depth (cm)	Conditions	Runs to resort	Weather (°C)	Last snow
	L	U	Piste	Off/p	
AUSTRIA					
Mayrhofen	5	70	poor	varied	closed
					line
					4 25/12
					(Spring conditions with slush in afternoons)
FRANCE					
Avoriaz	125	145	good	heavy	good
					sun -3 9/1
					(Generally good skiing; still sunny)
Megeve	55	190	good	varied	hard
					sun 1 8/1
					(Pistes becoming hard-packed in most areas)
Meribel	80	130	fair	moqui	fair
					sun -1 10/1
					(Still mostly good but worry patches growing)
ITALY					
Cortina	80	115	good	crust	fair
					sun 3 10/1
					(South facing slopes; slushy in pm, mostly good)
Livigno	95	200	fair	heavy	fair
					sun -3 7/1
					(Good snow above 2,000m; slopes very quiet)
SWITZERLAND					
C Moriana	40	285	good	varied	fair
					line 3 9/1
					(Everything open and mostly good; some worn spots)
Klosters	20	130	good	varied	icy
					fine 5 4/1
					(Skiing remains good at altitude, above 1,800m)

Source: Ski Club of Great Britain

L - lower slopes; U - upper

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MOTOR RACING 47

Hill put through trial by ordeal at Silverstone

SPORT

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FOOTBALL 51

Is Ravanelli poised to bolt once more?

Briton's promising run in Australian Open ends in swift defeat by Chang

Henman serves up false dawn

FROM MICHAEL HENDERSON
IN MELBOURNE

ILLUSIONS, illusions. Tim Henman had given a fair performance this week as a man of destiny but when the moment of truth arrived under the lights of the centre court of Melbourne Park, he appeared to be a man of straw.

Michael Chang did not just beat him. He sent him packing 6-1, 7-6, 6-3 with unmistakable ease.

In his moment of defeat Henman was slightly tetchy, which is not a bad thing so long as he is honest with himself in the more contemplative moments that lie ahead.

"I think by the time I walk out of the door I will have forgotten about this," he said, while at the same time admitting there were lessons to be learnt from such a resounding loss. In other words, he will not have forgotten about it at all, and he will not be permitted to until he beats a player of comparable stature in an important competition.

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This was a big match and it proved much too big for him.

He was vanquished, utterly, and no amount of flamboyance can after that basic, undeniable fact. Chang's mastery had the subsidiary effect of silencing the knot of English spectators, many wearing faces daubed with the flag of St George, who were "backtracking" for Henman, as the Australians put it. They, too, were obliged to admit that their man's passage through this tournament had been illusory.

After rouncing Andrei Pavel and Guillaume Raoux without dropping a set, Henman was in turn outplayed by a man whose superior athleticism and cunning, revealed the distance between the Englishman's ambition and his capacity to fulfil it. There was precious little conviction in his tennis and, without that quality, no sportsman is ever going to impose himself, particularly when his opponent is committed to the way Chang showed himself to be.

The beery roar that greeted Henman's first successful point, when Chang netted a backhand, brought some light



Dejection is etched deep into Henman's face during his straight-sets defeat by Chang, the No 2 seed, in the third round of the Australian Open at Melbourne Park

relief to a serious business. After Henman held his own service he then lost the next five games to surrender the first set in 26 minutes of painful self-realisation. He had twice held advantage on Chang's service in the fifth game, and the way he subsided set the tone for the night. The American was too imposing, too experienced on the big points.

In that first set Henman had been outplayed, chastened, and apparently full of resolve, he launched the sec-

ond set with some rippling strokes, driving back Chang as Chang had previously driven him. When he broke his service, and won the next game to love, he was 4-1 up; a new man, almost. He even broke Chang again to go 5-3 ahead before losing the next game to four unforced errors. When it went to a tie-break, Chang carried the first three points and won 7-3.

It had been a critical session of play. "Even though I played poorly," Henman said, "it should still have been one set

all. In future, if I can get there, I'll be able to say 'let's start again'. I was given my chance tonight and I didn't take it."

Henman talked a good game afterwards, a rather better game, in fact, than the one he had played. "I still have the belief that the next time I come up against him I can win. Even after playing 13 matches in three weeks I feel fresh, and capable physically. I will probably forget about this, and think about the start to the year."

Nerves, he said, played no

part in the performance. "I have played against people of similar class before, but I served pretty badly tonight and I never found much rhythm from the baseline. I made life difficult for myself, and made it easier for him. I was looking forward to the occasion, a match under lights on centre court, but I am not going to look into it any more than that at the moment."

Chang, seeded behind Pete Sampras, will now play Andrei Medvedev in the quarter-finals, and is determined to

add a second grand-slam title to his list after the French Open he won as a 17-year-old. He hardly saw enough of Henman to make an authoritative comment, but managed to say something complimentary about a "bright future ahead."

Henman, for his part, was grateful for the support of the small band of vocal Englishmen in the crowd, probably no more than 25 in number for all the talk of "Hennmania". "It shows that in tennis, and not just in England, I am begin-

ning to make an impact," he said.

He has made an impact, but the support he enjoyed here had little to do with that. The people rooting for him belonged to the floating-crowd whose interest in sport is temporary, and rooted mainly in the big occasions. There was not as much silly behaviour as one might have expected and there was a funny moment when an English voice suddenly beseeched Henman: "England expects!" It still does.

Northern lights can illuminate rugby

BY DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

IT HAS become fashionable in the increasingly sour Nineties to deride not only successful individuals but successful institutions. The tall-poppy syndrome, as the Australians call it, has a particularly English equivalent — the blooming rose plucked of its petals, one might say — and rugby union is no different.

Thus the five nations' championship that begins today in Edinburgh and Dublin is compared unfavourably, every day it seems, with the game as played in the southern hemisphere. We blind ourselves to the championship's virtues and blithely accept that everything in the Australian garden is wonderful, even when the evidence of the inaugural tri-nations championship last year is less than overwhelming.

It is true that rugby at its best is played in the southern hemisphere, but then what else is new? For nearly a century New Zealanders and South Africans have been playing a more effective, more

successful brand of rugby and the Australians a more attractive one. The difference now is that we see it far more frequently, not at intervals of ten years but every season, either in the flesh or courtesy of satellite television.

But not all their rugby is so palatable, so enriched with tries that we need to worship constantly at their altar. We would be far more profitably employed building up the virtues of our own championship, enhancing its enduring competitiveness, its capacity to surprise, its huge popularity and, if the playing standards are distinctly mixed, beseeching our technical staff to ensure that it becomes better.

Never can this be more true than in the year of a British Isles tour. The Lions will take themselves to South Africa this summer and their awakening from a four-year hibernation will act as an additional spur. Indeed, if Ian McGeechan, the Lions coach, had his way then the British Isles would be the crowning glory for incoming tour teams on an annual basis.

McGeechan will be in Edin-

FIVE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP



FIXTURES: Today: Ireland v France, Scotland v Wales, February 1; England v Scotland, Wales v Ireland, February 15; Ireland v England, France v Wales, March 1; England v France, Scotland v Ireland, March 15; France v Scotland, Wales v England.

burgh today, paying special attention to the half backs who oppose each other in Scottish and Welsh colours. The Lions manager, Fran Cotton, travels to Ireland to study their candidates, who include the rumbustious Keith Wood, not only the Ireland hooker but also their captain, which, in itself, puts him in line for the Lions role.

John Hart, the New Zealand

land coach, is among those who admire the five nations' championship but asks why it cannot be developed. That can be achieved not only by improved playing skills but by the admission of new blood — Italy are not so much knocking on the door as kicking the hinges off — or by the sort of bonus points system introduced in the tri-nations series and, nearer home, in the Welsh League.

Judging by the pronouncements from home unions representatives in Dublin yesterday, Italy will have to wait. Vernon Pugh, of Wales, who is also chairman of the International Rugby Football Board, said: "Italy have been told the door is open but it has to be demonstrated over a period of time that they have the competitive capacity to march and beat some of the five nations' sides."

"No one is saying that they have to win, for example, three out of five games but their leading club sides weren't too successful in this season's European competition."

Cotton believes that the southern hemisphere advan-

tage derives from their successful Super 12 series but that is no accident; it has been developing over the past decade, from Super 6 to Super 10 and, in a quasi-professional environment, even before the admission of full-scale professionalism in August 1995. In Britain, by contrast, there has been no preparation for the professional game, political debate still holds centre stage and forward planning is hindered accordingly.

Because of their playing strength and traditions, the five nations' championship desperately needs a strong lead from England and France which, as matters stand, it is by no means certain of getting. Nothing provokes a more positive reaction from the Celtic countries than the assumption that England will roll over them and positive rugby is what the championship needs more than anything else. We have seen it on the club scene and it is time the five nations' reflected that.

Driven Ashton, page 46
Wales' mission, page 46

Russell determined to make his mark

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN HAMILTON

JACK RUSSELL has vowed to fight on against the "monotony" of being the forgotten man of England's winter tour. Russell, condemned to almost total inactivity by England's decision to use Alec Stewart as wicketkeeper-batsman in the Test side, has played only three one-day matches during the 55-day-old campaign in Zimbabwe and New Zealand.

Today Russell appears for his old club, Tukapuna, in an Auckland League fixture — a move designed to give him much-needed match practice. The Gloucestershire wicketkeeper does not rule out a further appearance for the club he played for from 1983 to 1985 if the selection policy does not change.

Russell said: "The only time in my cricket career that I have experienced such a long period of inactivity like this was during my very first England tour — to Pakistan in 1987 — when I think I played 1½ days' cricket in eight weeks. But I was a youngster

then, learning my trade, and as you get older it gets harder to be on the sidelines. It has become a bit monotonous. It was great just to get out on to the field as a substitute fielder the other day in Palmerston North."

"I'm in a position where you have two options — give up or fight on, and I am not prepared to give up yet."

Russell fixed up his club match after confirming that he would not be playing in the four-day match against Northern Districts, England's final warm-up match before the first Test in Auckland next week.

England's batsmen, meanwhile, are likely to be denied the chance of taking a preparatory look at Simon Doull, 27, the highly-rated New Zealand fast bowler. Doull plays his club cricket for Northern Districts but the New Zealand management are well aware that he could be a secret weapon in the Test.

Dravid lifts India, page 47

Duberry plays the injured party in soap opera

BY RUSSELL KEMPSON
AND JOHN GOODBODY

LIFE at Chelsea this season has often taken on the guise of a soap opera, with interest and intrigue in abundance. Yesterday's tale from Stamford Bridge involved Michael Duberry, the England Under-21 central defender, Gianluca Vialli, the apparently unsettled Chelsea striker, and Paolo Maldini, Vialli's Italian compatriot.

Duberry's leading role in the latest episode of life with the not-so-ordinary footballing folk of west London, was not a pleasant one. He sustained a snapped Achilles tendon in training on Thursday and, after undergoing surgery yesterday, has been ruled out for the rest of the season.

"It is a great loss for us because he was a player who had come in and was doing well," Round Gullit, the Chelsea player-manager, said. "Michael just slipped over and injured himself."

Gullit also attempted to placate the increasingly agitated Vialli, who has not started any of Chelsea's last seven games and, subsequently, felt the need to voice his concern in the Italian media.

"I would hope anybody would be unhappy when they're not playing," Gullit said. "It means they are prepared to do the business when they come in. If they have something they want to say to me, though, they should come and see me."

Chelsea will play an away "friendly" match against AC Milan on February 19 and Gullit revealed that, while arranging the game, he made an inquiry about Maldini, the Italy and Milan defender. "I

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heard the rumours that Milan were ready to sell a lot of players and I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't ask for Maldini," Gullit said. "I can't imagine Milan would sell him, but I had to ask."

Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal manager, yesterday denied reports that the north London club was trying to sign Hristo Stichtkov, the Bulgaria and Barcelona striker, on loan.

Birmingham City have signed Anders Limpar, Everton's Swedish winger, for £100,000 until the end of the season. Limpar's contract at Goodison Park was due to run out in June and he would have been able to return to Europe on a free transfer.

The domestic transfer system in England is to be overhauled after the Bosman ruling by the European court. The Football Association is proposing that a professional player who is over 24 years old and out of contract should be available on a free transfer to another club. However, clubs that have signed a youngster will be entitled to compensation for training the player up to the age of 21 if he then wants to move to a new club rather than sign a new, three-year contract with his existing club. The compensation will be assessed by a panel.

Steve Double, the FA spokesman, said: "Our feeling is that the new system will bring us into line with the Bosman ruling and also with many other nations in Europe and keep the issue out of the courts. It is most unlikely that this new system will be in place before the summer and it is more likely that it will come into effect in 1998. At this stage it is still a document to be discussed."

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THE TIMES weekend

Five-page special on holidays in France travel - 17-21



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Jeffrey's very private view

When maverick chronicler of London's secret history Iain Sinclair asked Lord Archer to show off his riverside art collection, he didn't expect to get a look in. Then the invitation arrived...

I approached Alembic House, Lord Archer's Lambeth gaff, with a pistol to my head and hands tied behind my back. As it were, I had promised my wife that I would be on my very best behaviour; no jibes, no sneers, no cheap satire. None of the usual kneejerk formulaic picaresque comedy. This would be disinterested reportage, a nice blend of *Modern Painters* and *Hellot*. Footnoted gush. Discreet tracking shots across the Archer art hoard, admiring references to the famous Thames views.

I'd put my request in writing, explaining that I wanted to look over the collection and to weigh the pictorial values against the expressionist riffs on this stretch of the river by the painters Oskar Kokoschka and John Bellamy. I thought I might experiment with the Alan Whicker treatment, tiptoeing across Persian rugs while Archer talked me through the glittering acquisitions.

For a sweetener, the postscript to my letter dropped the name (with her permission) of an in-law of mine, a close friend of Jeffrey Archer's from his Oxford days. This is why, where my wife was concerned, I was dancing on eggshells. Her family had no problem in drawing a distinction between the relative merits of blood ties and speculative literature. Their sense of tribal self-interest made the Mafia look like wimps with a suntan. Fiction writing was, properly, a kind of hobby; unfortunate, but tolerable if I brought in cash or fame. In essence, it was all exhibition of bad manners. If such matters had to be performed in public, then Archer came as close as anyone to managing them with the proper style — by divorcing himself from textual mess and running the operation as effectively as any other public company. There was a highly visible product identity and no author. A trick for which I felt immoderate envy.

Alembic House, 93 Albert Embankment, is one of London's worst-kept secrets: anyone who can pick up a newspaper knows that Jeffrey Archer has bagged the top two floors, and spent almost £2 million refurbishing them. A show home for a social balloonist. Wouldn't you — if you could? If you had the bottle. If



Lord Archer, in near perfect alignment between the art treasures of his riverside home and the power of the Houses of Parliament: "a great place for hatching plots"

you were prepared to expose yourself to all that metropolitan magnificence: the Houses of Parliament, the Tate Gallery, the great bridges of London in perfect alignment. You can't get more upwardly mobile without taking on oxygen. This is the ultimate "riverside opportunity", the one the estate agents pay homage to in their Rotherhithe brochures.

The Alembic House lift was heavily quilted like a soft cell. It would absorb any cries for help. We were deposited in a panelled hallway, an antechamber with no obvious exit. We felt as if we had blundered into the coda of Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey; the lift had been a rebirth and now we had to choose the

right door. We scratched and tapped at the panels. Then, all at once, one of them swung back and an attractive young Sloane, crisp and efficient, appeared — to tell us that, unfortunately, Archer was away working on a book, and his son William, the art-history graduate and archivist of the collection, was not available to give us the tour, but we could help ourselves to the views in which we had expressed so much interest.

Game, set, and probably match, to Jeffrey. He had demonstrated his magnanimity by allowing us (myself and photographer Marc Atkins) to do precisely what I had requested in my letter — ponder the art collection and photograph the

splendid riverside prospects. I was in his debt — but he had not presented me with the opportunity to indulge in any form of interrogation, however bland. Absent, he was immune to ridicule, while I was obliged to do the decent thing by tactfully listing his possessions. Flawlessly played.

The secretary — personal assistant — retreated to her gantry, leaving us to come to terms with this gobsmacking exhibition of wealth and privilege. It would be a strong man who didn't fantasise about having the use of this flat, the low London skies, the glittering river. A great place for hatching plots, planning coups, or

indulging in cosmological meditation, but a hopeless place for hammering away at the keyboard. How could you compete with the panorama that enveloped you?

I've never been in a writer's home — if you could call this a home — that hit you with such a sense of its separateness. The qualitative difference that Scott Fitzgerald (one of the authors Archer purports to collect) saw as dividing the rest of us from the seriously rich. This was wealth as a vocation. I was used to apologetic cribs, part inherited, part salvaged — book wrecks, uncorseted sofas — not so much lived in as resurrected. The writer's life as an unequal struggle with chaos theory. Provisional slums

who had shown most faith in our project (whatever that was) that we trusted least. The leap of consciousness required to calmly evaluate the penthouse was beyond us. We were almost obliged to demonstrate our integrity by throwing ourselves from the balcony.

The spacious L-shaped apartment is on two levels, with the river-facing office/study set above the reception area, and accessed by marble stairs, flanked with golden griffins (multiples of the Maltese Falcon). The design is by Julian Dakowski — who also renovated the kitchen at Granchester. The eastern arm of the L faces downriver: the Houses of Parliament on the left bank and St Thomas' hospital on the right, with the three bridges (Lambeth, Westminster, Hungerford) diminishing in perfect perspective. Sitting at the end window, sundowner in hand, a tragic poet with a taste for sentimental elegies would have

"This is a show home for a social balloonist. You can't get more upwardly mobile without taking on oxygen. It is the ultimate "riverside opportunity", the one the estate agents pay homage to in their Rotherhithe brochures"

been uniquely placed to watch the *Marchioness* pleasure boat go down.

Archer's collection is "one of the most valuable in the land... which some estimate could be worth around £10 million": an assertion of his own taste, displayed in a building which he has paid for with his own cash, and which he makes more readily available to students and busybodies (such as Atkins and myself) than the galleries that we have been required to support. Archer's current exhibition can look across the river at the Tate without blushing. At £10 million, if that random figure means anything, his holdings are negligible, no more significant than the metricious trash amassed for Robert Maxwell's posthumous jumble sale. It couldn't be compared, for example, with the collection accumulated by the Dublin fertiliser magnate Sir Basil Goulding — with his Expressionist portfolio, magnificent examples of Kokoschka and Jack B. Yeats. Archer is more of a Jacobean, an adventurer, a New Man confirming his status by exhibiting a cabinet of curiosities.

But the scale and the organisation of Archer's set — right down to the vases of dying lilies — is one we have previously encountered only in public

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Nostalgia aside, there is little reason why anyone would want to shop in village shops. Unless, of course, they live on a diet of over-priced corned beef, sponge fingers and stale Sugar Puffs. No amount of heart-of-the-community talk can make up for the fact that, for the most part, village shops are poorly stocked, overpriced and no contest for the air-conditioned, wide-aisled pleasure of out-of-town supermarkets.

Different shops have chosen different paths to survival. The most pathetic are those which have gone beyond Ragù and turned themselves into feeble imitations of the urban delicatessen. In shopping terms, they are the equivalent of those early Italian restaurants which served spaghetti, mince and ketchup and called it bolognese. With limp lemon grass

and curling parma ham, the owners are like awkward farmhands at the village squire's table, struggling to please the city weekenders. "Good, it's so sweet," bray the visitors on first arriving. "We must buy everything here, so good for the community." In a few weeks, however, they are turning up for the weekend with boxfuls of artichoke hearts and parmesan from some darling city creep called Ottavio. The shop becomes nothing more than somewhere to grab a packet of Silkies en route to the Michelin-starred pub-restaurant down the road.

At Wisteria Cottage, East Hendred, Oxfordshire, however, they seem to have found a way forward for the village shop. Wrapped in a mid-morning mist, its protruding window glows with those emergency staples: cereal, bread, and Maltin. "The bubbliest

bubble bath". Old ladies pulling their trolleys, and peroxide teenagers in army surplus clothes, breeze in and out. It looks easily the cosiest place in a very cosy village, not in the least bit threatened by the mega-markets thronging just a few miles away.

The owner is Helen Noll, a deeply practical, big-sisterly woman in her early thirties, who, with her husband, began renting the 500-year-old shop two years ago. A door behind the till leads through to her house. The kitchen also serves as laundry room and office, and the smell of washing powder and laundered Y-fronts mingles with that of the soup on the Aga. "It's farmhouse soup, which can mean just about any-



BY PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

thing," Mrs Noll says. "We make it every day, particularly for the older people, who like to take it away for lunch."

On one side of the shop is the

post office, a dark, wooden cubicle, with just enough room for the postmistress to squeeze in. This is the focus for all that Ealing comedy-style village chatter. "She's just had her blood check and the baby's due in February, no April," said one woman, discussing her daughter with two friends. Another elderly woman, her head wrapped tightly in a blue and gold scarf, handed a fat letter across the counter, addressed to New York. "I couldn't stop writing this time," she said. "I'm sure she will," the postmistress reassured. Talk of saving the Tiffed Thunderbolt and rescuing wee Timmy from the mill pond was doubtless scheduled for the afternoon.

In the fridge are pork sausages brought in each evening by a man in the village who works at Fellers, a butcher in Oxford's covered market. The milk is full fat, un-homogenised and comes from the Mount Pleasant dairies in Oxfordshire. "We call it happy milk," Mrs Noll says. Thick white loaves of bread from Chieveley, near Newbury, sit on top of the cheese counter alongside chocolate sponge and madeira cakes. English wine from a local vineyard and honey from an apiary on a nearby farm are also on sale.

Aside from being an outlet for local English goodies, the shop remains a focus for the village. In the summer it organises a marmalade competition, which is judged by Father Robin, the Catholic priest, and a fund-raising karaoke and pig roast evening after the summer. Fairy lights are

thrown up round the garden and everyone from the council house residents at the top of the village to Lord Jenkins of Hillhead and the fast livers of the local racing community joins in. Even J.J. Priestley would have to have been in a particularly purple mood to invent this lot.

A rustic delicatessen then, but steeped in sponge-fingered traditions, this may be the future for the village shop.

Since her arrival as the shopkeeper, Mrs Noll has already been asked to be godmother to one local child. As her rally of godchildren rises, and it undoubtedly will, and she grows into ever more of an Auntie Bun, she and East Hendred will have found a way to cock their village snook at the corporate retailing monsters, hungry for their business.

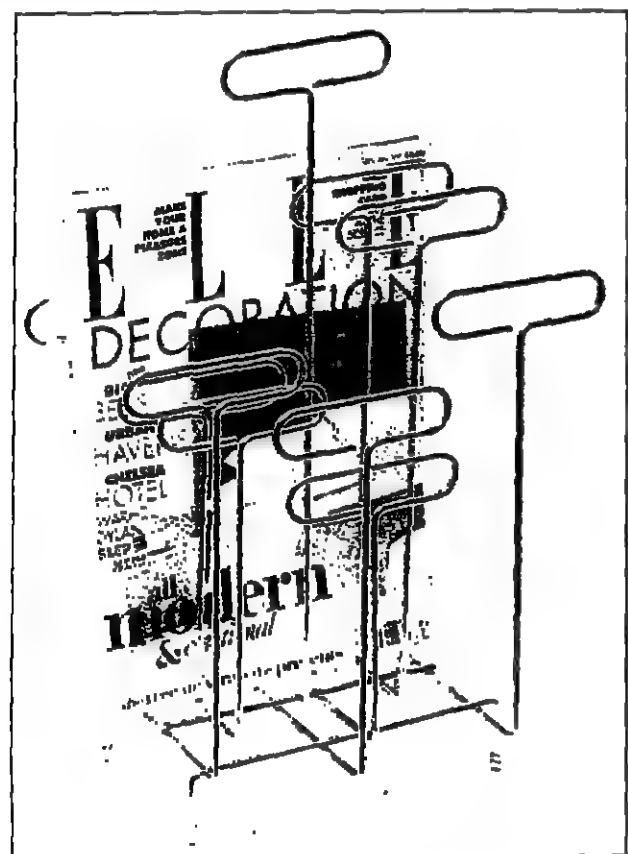
● Giles Coren is away.

SERIOUS SHOPPING THE VILLAGE SHOP

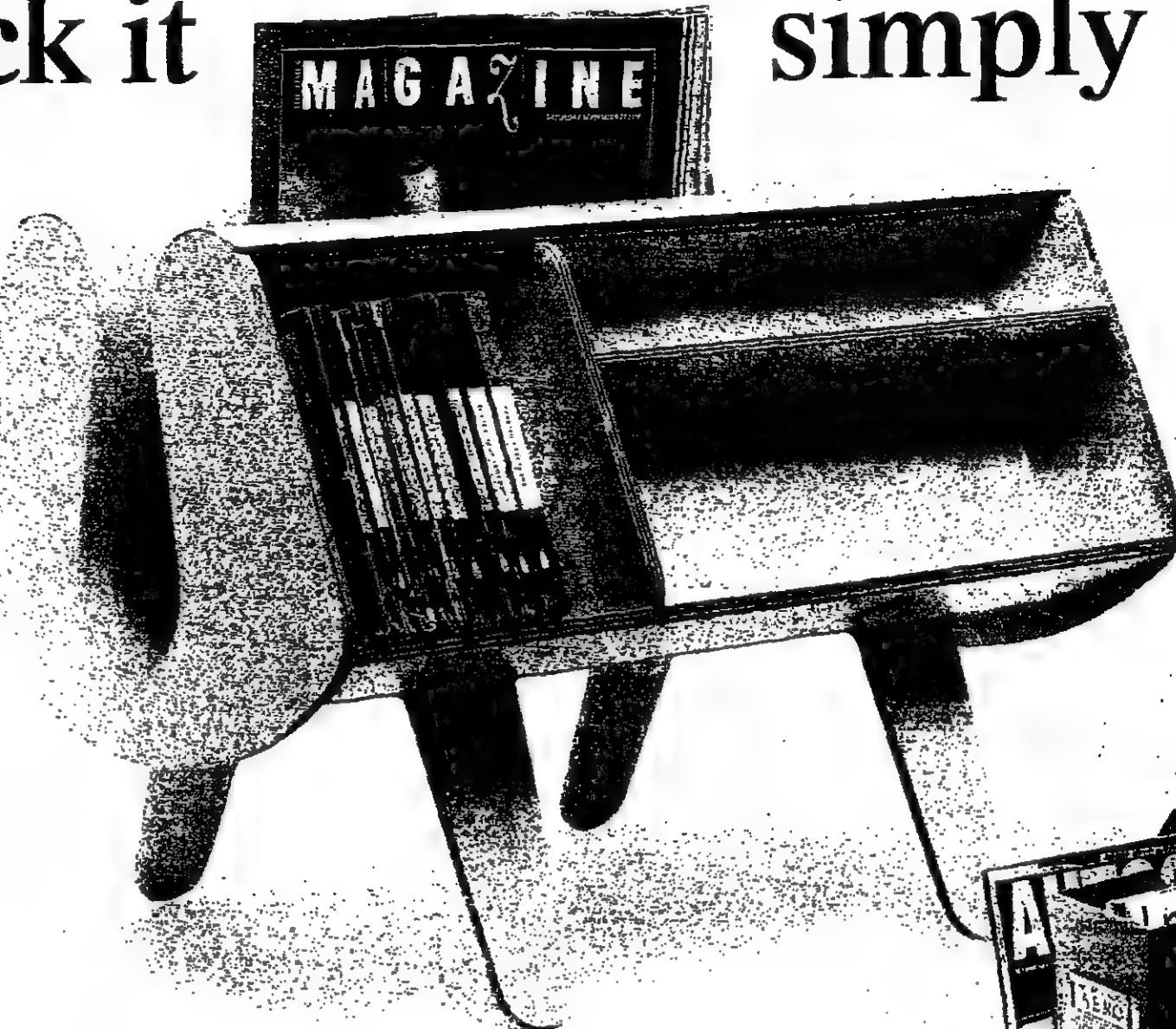
Don't stack it

simply rack it

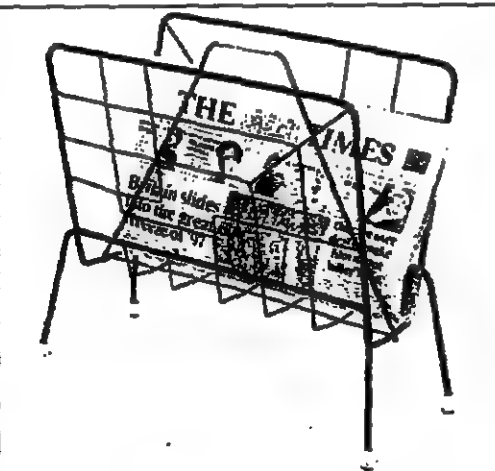
COMPULSIVE magazine and newspaper buying has its down side: you have to live with a tower of messy journals on the brink of collapse and the tricky manoeuvre of extracting the one you want that is always at the bottom of the pile. The solution is a magazine rack — anything from a wire basket to a wooden design classic. Here's a selection of the best. *Sue Parker*



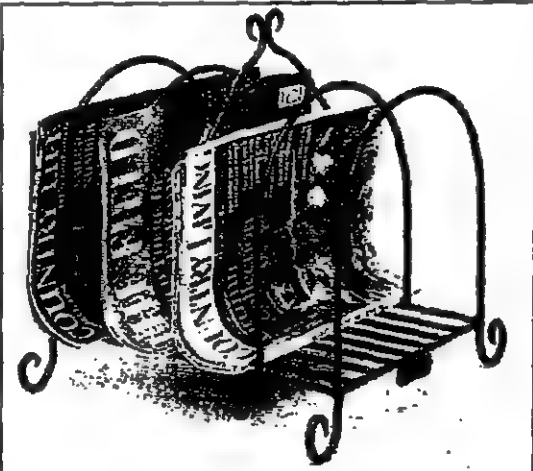
ABOVE: Minimalist chrome Forest magazine holder, £30, from Wireworks (0171-724 8856)



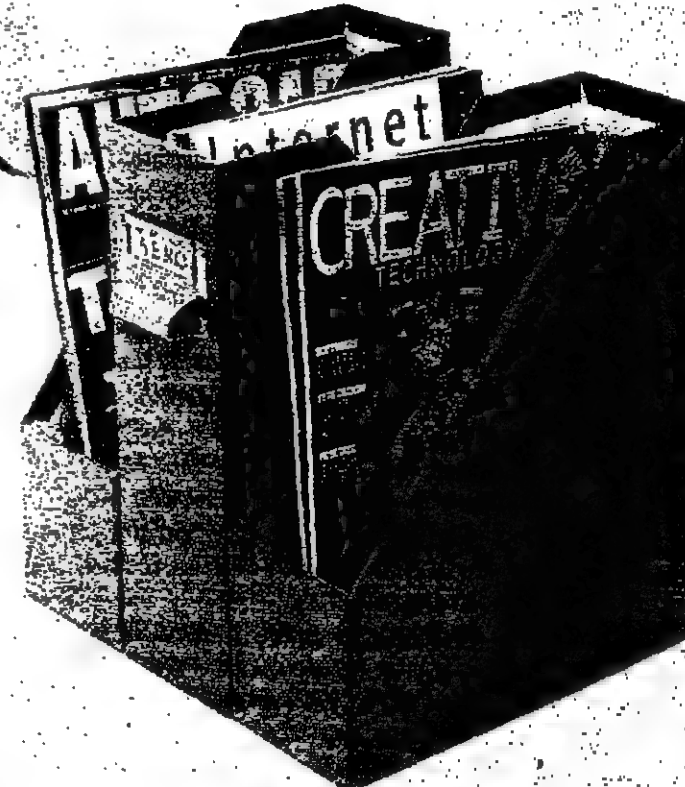
ABOVE: Oval wire basket, £7.50, from the Source, 26-40 Kensington High Street, London W8 (0171-937 2626)



RIGHT: Original 1950s magazine rack, £12, from a selection at Flying Duck Enterprises, 320-322 Creek Road, Greenwich, London SW10 (0181-858 1964)



ABOVE: The teak Penguin donkey in birch ply, designed by Egon Riss in 1939, which holds books and magazines, £276, from Coedance, 288 Upper Street, London N1 (0171-354 8817)



LEFT: Wrought iron teak-rack style magazine holder, £34.95 plus £5 p.p., from Bombay Duck mail order (0181-964 8862)

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TT 10/97

'This glass cage must be hell for a man of ambition'

Continued from page 1

spaces, hotels or boardrooms (glimpsed on our explorations of the City). And that is as it should be: because the penthouse is the headquarters of a public company, Jeffrey Archer, his works and thoughts. You can't sit here doing the crossword, dipping your nails, or scoffing a TV dinner. You are perpetually confronted by the unrelenting buzz of London, the challenge of all those centres of power and influence — the indifferent, remorseless river.

This glass cage, whatever the indulgence of the toys on the table, the mirrors and the golden birds, must be hell for a man of ambition and unflagging energy who has been excluded from the inner councils of government.

To be the first clown in the land, warm-up act, cheer leader, must be an act of peculiar generosity and well-disguised bitterness. To be left with the surrogate drama of prose — which, with each successive book, more and more material used up, becomes a harder labour. The brutal exposure of inadequacy that is any long-term literary career. Choosing the art that will promote your own special quality of discernment (and also express, by analogue, your personality in the form of a pictorial autobiography of developing taste) demands specialised help: investment brokers, fabric designers, style consultants. You always end up — because, after all, you are the one who is footing the bill — with much more stuff than any one life can reasonably absorb. Which Miro for the staircase? Which Picasso dove shall hang en route to the lavatory? Which Lowry should signal the common touch?

Private plunder, the discreet

pornography of the tycoon evolves towards institutional benevolence: departments of research and education, sponsorship facilitators, career aesthetes, well-bred diplomats schooled to talk money. Archer's collection is still in the primitive stage. It will be left, so it is understood, when the time comes — and after his son William, the art historian, has taken his pick — to Archer's old Oxford college, Brasenose.

All museums, libraries and galleries, should be banished to Oxford. Let them be for the exclusive use of those who will walk there. London should be left to the cut-purse brigands, hustlers, gamblers, couriers, actors, whores, and other creatures of business. It's speedy, crazed, murderous — but never speedy enough. There are too many artificial Deep England villages, too many smoke-free zones, too much repressive hypocrisy. Museums have got above themselves, touting for funds, when they should remember their origins as mere cabinets of curiosities. Boxes of tricks, bits of animal skin, fossils, plant freaks: blood cargo. You can't make this pillage respectable by enclosing it in a fancy public building — with an outhouse for the sale of postcards and embossed pencils.

Lord Archer understood this: he would scavenge, bargain with gallery owners, play the market. (He also had postcards made of the prime items in his collection. But these were for promotion not for retail.)

I took out my notebook and began, like a bailiff, to list the art works: two Lowrys down at the east end (art for those who don't like art, those who are endowed with a healthy measure of English cynicism — the visual equivalent of Philip Larkin). A weary and



Lord Archer among the treasures in his refurbished £2 million London penthouse

bloodless elitism disguised by technical competence. A 1958 seascape with jetties and tripods like burnt out match-ends. A steep flight of steps from 1961. Both genuine. I would say. Cautiously modest, with plenty to be modest about.

To the right of this pair, in a position of prominence, is a much noisier affair, a Vuillard, a family group. An acquired set, not Archer's own family — although the woman, it can't be denied, has something of the hauteur of Mary Archer. Painterly virtues, colour harmonies, balance and composition remove this piece from the genre that comes to mind: the reworked Pollock.

Moving down the passage that leads to the stairs and the private sleeping quarters, you glide along the inevitable anthology of political cartoons. There is the exhibition, beloved by politicians, of a

this is a purser's office on a cruise liner. No lightweight furniture. Everything bolted in its place. Uncluttered desk and built-in bookcases, with some small part of Jeffrey Archer's collection of first editions — all by one author, himself. I've never before seen paperbacks bound in silver, books bright and shiny enough to satisfy the most fastidious of dealers. (Is it possible to re-read an Archer?)

"His" and "Hers" desks sit on either side of the stairwell, backed by a run of Royal Doulton Thames river scenes, liquid blue stoneware, recalling the masters in the cafe-bar on the other side of the road. Inoffensive, emotional prompts.

The PA is struggling, ringing round her mates for advice — without success. She's been asked to book tickets for a show with a title she can't begin to pronounce; let alone feed into the spell check. *Pearl Gynat*. Having suffered through a misguided production of the *Barbican*, I'm reckless enough to help her out. To employ someone to take care of them for you must be the ultimate luxury. It goes with the cricket bat inscribed by the English Test team of 1992 to the best captain they never had, and the Max Ernst sculpture (bookend steel, the W.C. Grace caricature, the japed Coke can, the rebound set of Dickens with glib-edges (books as furniture), the lamps and mirrors and framed photographs.

The PA was still busy on the phone — "Go to Harvey Nichols and you can't look at a summer outfit for under £2,000. Honestly, you need at least £50 for a T-shirt," — as we waved our farewells, semi-phoned our gratitude.

● Extracted from *Lights Out for the Territory*, by Ian Sinclair. To be published by Granta Books at £12.99 on January 23

Hair accessories are back, says Heath Brown, and there are sticks, combs, clips and slides for every hairdo



LEFT: Zigzag stretch hairband, £2.95. Top: aqua cut-out gilt clip, £11.95, both Johnny Loves Rosie, Fenwicks, Bond Street, W1 (0171-629 9161). Below: flower clip, £4.99. Accessories, branches nationwide (0171-313 3000). Back: gilt long-tooth comb, £2.95, Fenwicks

RIGHT: Burgundy velvet tulle hair band, £7.95. Top: small double-rose clip, £9.95, from a wide selection at Fenwicks, Bond Street, W1 (0171-629 9161). Below: rose hair stick, £12.50 each, Jackson, Whistles, 12 St Christopher's Place, W1 (0171-243 8800)

Get a head – get a hairband

Whether you have flowing locks or short-cropped hair, a woman's head will not be properly dressed without the obligatory hair accessory. Long hair can be twisted and secured into elegant chignons using butterfly clips or haircombs. Shorter cuts can be dressed up with decorative slides or barrettes.

Mary Flack, of Fenwicks of Bond Street, says that the resurgence of hair adornments began before Christmas and looks set to be in full swing by the summer. "Sticks, combs, clips and slides in all sorts of designs are a must-have," she says. "The biggest theme is floral."

Four flowers attached to combs and clips are the perfect partner to the soft feminine frills, sheers and florals of this summer's clothes. Large fabric roses look dramatic, while smaller rows of silk flowers are subtle and romantic.

The catwalks of Milan and Paris showed a large selection of floral hairwear for this spring and summer. Dolce & Gabbana showed large, cloth cabbage-roses teamed with its Chinese and flowered print outfits; Versace punctuated his show with sprigs of foliage clipped, pinned and skewered; and Valentino had orchid-effect additions to high frizzed

hairdos. Good examples to be found nationwide are from stockists of Johnny Loves Rosie (0171-435 0099), or look out for loose single fabric flowers from haberdashery departments to customise your look.

The tortoiseshell effect is another big look for more delicate slides and pins. Shorter hairstyles with just enough length to hold a slide look good with a few stripes of tortoiseshell. It is also perfect for the beiges and browns of the moment and will work well with blonde, brunette and black hair.

The same goes for the gold accessories that are prevalent now. The shapes shown are modernist and abstract, with belt-buckle designs, matt bars and bubble motifs.

Beware of the cheap and tacky when choosing hair accessories, says the hairdresser Trevor Sorbie. "Go for the best quality, because cheaper accessories can damage the hair, causing it to break off. And always check that there are no sharp edges on combs or slides."

For thicker hair, Sorbie suggests using long-prong combs or one-prong pins. For finer hair it is better to use hair slides that lock into place. Styles should have a feeling of being loose and free while still being securely pinned.

THREE OF A KIND
The short macintosh is a springtime essential. It is a handy coverall that evokes the romance of rainy days in Paris, with a twist of Audrey Hepburn 1950s chic. H.B.



FAR LEFT: Stone double-breasted mac, £138, from Jigsaw, 126 New Bond Street, W1, and selected branches nationwide (0171-491 4484). MIDDLE: Black waterproof geberdine mac, £48.50, from the La Redoute catalogue (available from 0500 777777). LEFT: White nylon foldaway mac, £19.99, from the Empire catalogue (available from 0345 200400)

Zigzag hair bands are the best way to keep a mass of over-uruly hair in place, but stay clear of solid hairbands and Alice bands in thick velvet or coloured plastic. Elastic hair "bobbles" are still around but avoid the "scrunchie". The new dressed-up hair is feminine, subtle and sophisticated.



ABOVE: Tortoiseshell hair band, £9.99, Oasis, selected branches nationwide (0171-452 1000)

Below hair band: (left) circle clip, £3.99 (for two), Next, branches nationwide (0116-284 9424); (right) small clip, £9.95, Fenwicks, as before

Photographs by Richard Burns.
Hair and make-up by Sally Kvetholm.
Styling by Amanda Uppl.

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GARDEN ANSWERS



STEPHEN ANDERTON
replies to readers' letters

Q I want to plant an evergreen flowering climber on a north-facing, pebble-dashed wall, but the only ones I can find in books are *Berberidopsis corallina* and *Pileostegia viburnoides*. Would either be suitable? — M. Okola, Headington, Oxford.

A *Berberidopsis* is on the tender side and too unreliable for such a purpose. *Pileostegia*, which is in the hydrangea family, would succeed, but it is slow and you would need to be patient. It has good, evergreen leaves and is self-clinging by means of aerial roots. It appreciates shelter. In time, it will build into generous billows of foliage on the wall, rather as the deciduous climbing *Hydrangea petiolaris* does. On a pebble-dashed wall, aerial roots, as found in *Pileostegia* and ivy, can find their way into surface cracks and let in water, so be sure the surface is in good order before using these plants.

Deciduous alternatives include climbing roses or the Virginia creeper look-alike *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* 'Veitchii', which clings by harmless suckers.

Q My son has a 'James Grieve' apple which bore only 12 apples this year. It has two spindly side shoots, with a bulge around the base, just above ground level. What is the answer? — Rev. C.W. Earle, Ware, Hertfordshire.

A It sounds as if the tree could do with some formative pruning, to encourage a proper branch structure. But why is it

growing so weakly? I suspect that the bulge is the graft point. If the graft is incomplete, the growth above will be weak. It may be that the graft was not properly formed when the tree was purchased. Or it may be that the graft has partly broken open due to inadequate staking. Significant bulging suggests there is a fault in the graft. If so, you will have to buy a new tree and start again.

Q I planted 500 crocuses to brighten up the spring garden. Five weeks later, I found that mice had eaten the lot. Do you think a dusting with sulphur at planting would deter the mice? I live in the country and could not hope to eliminate mice by trapping, as E.A. Bowles suggests in his book *Crocuses and Calceolus*. — J.M. Hughes, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire.

A By all means try sulphur. Bowles also cites a Flemish text of 1614 showing mice eating crocuses, so the problem is as old as they come. Rubbing the corns in paraffin-soaked sand works in some cases. Crocuses can be protected by setting fine wire mesh over the corns and under the turf, but this is only practical in small areas. A cat helps, of course.

Q Readers should write to: *Garden Answers*, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 4XN. We regret that it may not be possible to deal with every request. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. The Times also regrets that any enclosures cannot be returned.

Nigel Colborn welcomes the renewed interest in holly, that Victorian garden and park favourite



Horticulturist John Ravenscroft in the grounds of Bridgemere Garden World in Nantwich, Cheshire, with an example of a silver holly, *Ilex aquifolium* 'Argentea Marginata'.

Return of a prickly customer

For serious gardeners the past century has left a rich, if neglected, legacy. Evergreens of all kinds have been cherished since pre-Roman days — how else can you ensure winter structure and interest? — but Victorians had a special love for them, specifically holly. More new forms and varieties of holly appeared in the 19th century than ever before: the wealthy planted their es-

tates with them and city philanthropists profiled public parks with as many members of the genus *Ilex* as possible.

After two world wars, however, fashions changed and conifers, mostly from North America, began to supplant the holly. For decades, the staggering range of *Ilex* species and varieties declined, replaced by *Thuja*s, cypresses, junipers and the monstrous leylandii hedge. Then came

heather and conifer beds, and even the lazy gardener's dream turned into nightmare by the 1980s on realising how awful they looked.

Thankfully, those Victorian hollies proved to be durable, surviving in old parks and gardens and propagated by a few devotees. Just as well, because one such specialist, John Ravenscroft, the founder of Bridgemere Garden World, points out that today's discerning gardeners abhor conifers and are turning to holly. He should know, he grows 30,000 of them every year in Cheshire and is expanding his production.

"All gardens need evergreens," he says, "but holly has such big advantages over conifers. Greatest of these is the holly's amazing power of recovery." Conifers cannot regenerate and if pruned too hard, will be ruined. Holly, however, benefits from pruning, producing vigorous young growth.

Hollies will also tolerate poor drainage better than conifers. This is especially important in the gardens of new houses, Mr Ravenscroft says. But the biggest advantage of hollies is that they are much more versatile. "You can grow them as large trees, clip them to any size or shape for topiary or formal hedges, plant them to create an informal, sound-deadening, impenetrable and highly decorative screen," he says.

Hollies are infinitely variable. There are varieties such as *Ilex aquifolium* 'Pendula' that weeps like willows, others such as *I. aqu.* 'Hascombensis' that forms an upright exclamation mark, and *I. aqu.* 'Baccifera', whose outline is pyramidal.

The naming of many of the older varieties is riddled with confusing Latin and based on the classification by the plantsman John Claudius Loudon in the 1840s, when such nomenclature was fashionable. The name *altissimus*, for example, refers to the

MOST POPULAR HOLLIES

- Green foliage:** *Ilex altissimus* 'Hodginsii' (male). Superbly glossy on smooth leaves. *I. alt.* 'Wilsonii' (female). Modest berry-cropper, large leaves with short prickles.
- Golden variegation:** *I. aquifolium* 'Madame Briot' (female). Classic holly leaf shape with strong gold leaf edge. Young shoots burnish in winter. Perfect with red berries.
- I. alt.* 'Belgica Aurea'. Almost smooth, long, oval leaves with narrow gold margins, moderate cropper.
- Silver variegation:** *I. 'Handsworth New Silver'* (female). Longish leaves, narrow silver margins, purple bark, moderate cropper.
- I. aqu.* 'Ferox Argentea' (male). Prickly foliage, streaked in silver. Profuse pollinator, so good to plant with females.
- Interesting shapes:** *I. aqu.* 'Green Pillar'. Forms a perfect column, wider at base than top. Good berries, good green leaves.

Highclere estate in Hampshire, where the cross between *I. aquifolium* and *I. perado* was first developed.

Most daunting of these names is the silver hedgehog holly *Ilex aquifolium* 'Ferox Argentea', a tongue-numbing mouthful, but at least one is saved the horror of such modern plant monickers as 'Nylon Ruffles' or 'Sexy Rexy'.

Ilex is a large genus, with wild species in every continent except Australasia. Even island groups such as Madeira and the Canaries have their native hollies, each distinctive and many useful for breeding hybrids. There are tender species such as *I. cornuta*, a Korean shrub with pointed, prickly leaves and huge red berries; small shrubs such as the unholly-like Japanese *I. crenata*, whose berries are black; and deciduous kinds, such as the strange *I. verticillata*, which presents winter

berries without a leaf in sight. The most widely developed, and the most decorative garden varieties have almost all been raised either from the common English holly *I. aquifolium* or the closely related hybrid *I. altissimus*.

Mr Ravenscroft is unequivocal about his choices. "The best for foliage is 'Hodginsii', he says. "It keeps its gloss in winter better than any others." Being an *altissimus* variety, it might be fractionally less hardy than wild English holly, but it thrives in my Lincolnshire garden along with *I. alt.* 'Wilsonii', whose big, glossy leaves are a lighter shade of green and has the advantage of being female and, therefore, berry-bearing.

Berries are important, Mr Ravenscroft says, but varieties that bear too heavily often suffer leaf-drop the following season, and that makes them unsightly until they recover —

a good argument, I suggest, for planting males and females together, because apart from the need for fertilisation, the foliage on the male is possibly more dependable. Or choose a variety that bears moderate berry crops, Mr Ravenscroft advises.

Tentatively, I suggest another of my favourites, *I. alt.* 'Belgica Aurea', with its oval, nearly thornless leaves, each boldly edged in gold — a wonderful contrast for the red berries. Mr Ravenscroft agrees. "It's a nicely pyramidal tree, too," he says, "but the absolute best leaf and berry combination is 'Handsworth New Silver', whose leaves are neatly marked with silver-edges and contrasting dark purple new stems."

"One of the downsides of holly is weeding among fallen leaves," he says. "It's agony. But perhaps the biggest disadvantage is that when you buy a holly tree, you appear to get little for your money." A 2ft tall holly in most garden centres will cost about the same as a 10ft cherry or crab apple, so the impression is of poor value. But hollies are not slow growers.

"When you plant a holly hedge," Mr Ravenscroft says, "select 2ft 6in plants and set them at a 45-degree angle to the ground. That way, the branches will grow up, so thickly that you will get an impenetrable, thief-proof barrier. And, should someone drive a car through it, remember holly's power of recovery."

Three hundred years ago the diarist John Evelyn was horrified when his guest, Peter the Great of Russia, borrowed a horse and used his 400ft-long holly hedge as jumping practice, wrecking it in the process. Within a season, however, it was well on the mend, inspiring him to write: "It mocks at the rude assaults of weather, beasts, or hedgebreakers."

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Drama among a winter landscape

Rydal Hall, Rydal, Ambleside, Cumbria (01539 432050)

Sign-posted off A591 two miles north of Ambleside. Open daily 9am-dusk. Voluntary donations

The William Wordsworth shrine at neighbouring Rydal Mount is better known than this, one of the gardens by the Lake District's most distinguished designer, Edwardian Thomas Mawson. Mawson's priority of designing gardens that progressed from formality around the house to areas of more informal plantings of trees and shrubs, merging into woodland, is evident here during winter. Sweeping stone steps descend from the house to lawns with formal beds. But the effect of architectural formality is accentuated by its contrast with rugged wooded hills and the stream that pours down waterfalls. The garden has undergone restoration since the house was taken on by the Diocese of Carlisle.

Lanhydrock, Bodmin, Cornwall (01208 73520)

Off B3268, A38 and A30, two miles southeast of Bodmin. Open daily during daylight. Free to enter Feb, then £3

This is the time to enjoy one of the National Trust's most visited gardens in the southwest. And while you may miss the great banks of colour that start in

spring, it is during winter that the stone house, church and gatehouse are most dramatically shown off in their garden and park setting. From the main woodland garden, you look down over the granite buildings and great drums of yew, and it is also possible to appreciate the

skill, with which trees and shrubs are grouped. And although Lanhydrock does not enjoy the extremely mild conditions of Cornwall's southern coastal gardens, even in January the signs of flowering activity are often beginning.

Belsay Hall, Belsay, near Newcastle upon Tyne (01661 881630)

About 14 miles northwest of Newcastle via A696. Open daily 10am-6pm to end of March, then 10am-5pm. £3, children £1.50

The full dramatic potential of Belsay — built during the early 19th century with stone quarried on a site made into a garden of rocky ravines — has maximum effect on a crisp winter's day. And the 30 acres have much else to offer including a winter garden and the walk which winds through woods containing majestic conifers and along the lakeside — with constant views to the symmetrical house. With contributions from the early 19th century when the balance of garden and parkland was first established, to later in that century when exotic tree specimens were among the additions, and a sympathetic restoration by English Heritage, Belsay is now an intriguing example of gardening history.

GEORGE PLUMPTRE

Where you can let your dream garden take seed

There are eight or more leading seed suppliers in Britain, each sending out enticing catalogues, and you may be wondering how to choose between them. The differences are considerable.

To get the best when buying seeds by mail order you need to be certain about what kind of plants you want and which are the specialist suppliers.

Different companies have different ranges. Unwins, for example, is known for its flowers, especially sweet peas, though it sells some vegetables, too. Marshall's, owned by the Unwins group, specialises in vegetables but sells the kind of flowers you might grow on an allotment for cutting or as bedding plants, and has increased its catalogues to two a year, to catch the autumn market. Some have a foot in both the flower and vegetable camps, with a few shrubs and perennials as well.

All the companies are keen to keep and increase their share of sales and, therefore, like to dabble in most areas of plant growing.

Unwins is keen to sell specialist bulbs but, because it is a sweet pea specialist, has already sent out an autumn catalogue to mailing-list customers who want to get their sweet pea seeds planted in winter.

Competition is fierce and seed companies are not on the sweetest terms. Most told me that their aim is to have about 100 new additions to the catalogue every year, which is good in that it brings in new varieties but depressing in that many old favourites are all too often consigned to the scrap heap of fashion.

Seymour's Seeds, which introduces 100 new additions a year, claims to have the keenest prices, and simulates the John Lewis "never knowingly undersold" policy, so if a customer finds one of the company's items cheaper elsewhere, they will receive a free packet of seeds and a credit voucher to the value of the packet.

Many of the "new" varieties are bred by wholesale seed growers, who supply the seed-selling companies. Martin Thresher, the horticultural manager of Thompson & Morgan, which has a plantlet

If you want a beautiful summer or autumn garden, you'll need to order seeds now, says **Stephen Anderton**

MAIN SEED SUPPLIERS

■ Britain's largest seed companies include:
Seymour's Seeds, 1000, Bloomfield Way, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7QW (01803 698888);
D.J. Brown & Co. Station Road, Thatcham, Wiltshire WY6 7JH (01253 88237);
W.W. Johnson & Son, London Road, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 8AD (0800 614323);
S.E. Marshall and Co. Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE21 2RF (01945 35547);
Mr. Thresher's Seeds, Gazeley Road, Keston, Nottingham, Suffolk CB8 7QB (01638 751164);
Seymour's Selected Seeds, Admell 962, Farm Lane, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE11 1TD (01431 65270);
Seymour's Seeds, Hale Road, Torquay, TQ2 7QJ (01803 614455);
Marshall's & Marshall, 100, Poplar Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 3BU (01473 688821);
Unwins Seeds, Mail Order Dept, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4ZZ (01945 35547).



Time to get your seeds now

■ Smaller suppliers include:
Chiltern Seeds, Bortree Stile, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 7BP (01229 581137);
Plant World Botanic Gardens, Seed Dept (P), St Marychurch Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 4SE (01803 872939);
■ Many of the smaller suppliers are listed in *The Plant Finder* (RHS, £11.99, ISBN 0 951 2618 X), from all good booksellers.

offshoot in Guernsey, reckons that of its 100 new additions every year, 15 will be bred by themselves — which Mr Thresher claims is a high proportion within the industry — 25 by wholesale breeders and 50 by specialist growers, breeders and the biggest garden nurseries.

However, the time taken to develop a new variety is four to five years, so even 15 new plants a year means significant and costly research expenditure.

To some gardeners here, the surprising thing is that behind the packing sheds of the British seed suppliers are no great fields emblazoned in living colour: most seed is

grown abroad, in New Zealand, Africa, India and other parts of Europe, and in climates where two generations of seed can be grown in one year, a double cropping which keeps the development time of a variety down to four to five years.

Registration of new varieties takes time, too. "Flowers are easy," Mr Thresher says, "but vegetables are very, very slow." He cites EC rules as one of the reasons.

Despite all the problems, Unwins is now selling seeds over the counter in 21 countries, including every state in America, and in Russia, where flowers for drying are particularly popular.

Stephen Anderton has been recognised as the top newspaper writer for 1996 by the Garden Writers' Guild. It is the second year in succession that he has won the award.

Among the many seed catalogues, Thompson & Morgan's stands out as an exception. It offers flowers and vegetables but also a range of exotic trees, shrubs and houseplants. It is often the first port of call for eager gardeners wanting to grow something a little more unusual from seed.

The Thompson & Morgan catalogue is glossy and its distribution is immense: in millions rather than hundreds of thousands, as with other seed suppliers. For 20 years Thompson & Morgan has distributed an American catalogue, from its New Jersey office, which contains the same range of flowers as in the British catalogue but also a selection of vegetables specially adapted to American tastes and climates. All the plants offered are marked with a hardiness zone rating, a system which is generally used across America.

This winter sees the arrival of another Thompson & Morgan office in Arras, France, and a catalogue containing plants from the British catalogue.

In the Thompson & Morgan catalogue you can also find the latest fashionable darlings of the hardy plant world, such as the wonderful verdigris-blue *Cerinth major 'Purpurascens'* (which seems to be much harder than the plain green form), alongside the regular stock-in-trade pansies, busy lizzies and geraniums.

But the catalogue also offers things such as baobab trees, magnolias, various edible passion flowers, and cypresses.

If you are looking for something unusual to try, the best alternative to Thompson & Morgan, apart from the seed lists of specialist suppliers such as the Hardy Plant Society and Alpine Garden Society, is Chiltern Seeds, a small family firm in Cumbria. Its catalogue has no pictures, no glitz, but has at least 300 new additions every year.

Where else do you find 70 species of eucalyptus tree, 30 aegleas, dozens of different cacti, 50 sweet peas (including the wild, heavily perfumed *Lathyrus odoratus*), which hazels, and the deceptively beautiful "murderous poisoner" *Boopis disticha*?



Cerinth major 'Purpurascens' from Thompson & Morgan



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LEICESTERSHIRE
 The Old Chapel, Wymondley Lane, Wymondley. Converted Baptist chapel with gardens and gravelled driveway. Four bedrooms, two bathrooms, living room (34ft x 36ft), with original arched, stained-glass windows and pulpit and kitchen. About £175,000 (Savills, Walker Walton, 0115 955255).

HAMPSHIRE
 The Old Church House, St Leonard, Beaulieu. Converted rural chapel, a mile from the Beaulieu river, with garden and views to the sea of Wight. Three bedrooms, shower-room, bathroom, two reception rooms with vaulted ceilings, Gothic arches, classical columns and a former tomb. Kitchen and breakfast room. About £275,000 (John D Wood, 01590 672331).

CHERYL TAYLOR

Lack of quality houses for sale has put churches back in demand, says Cheryl Taylor

Church conversions became fashionable in the early 1980s when property developers and buyers, eager for something different, snapped up run-down churches going cheaply and turned them into characterful and unusual homes.

The Church of England and the Methodist Church soon realised there was money to be made from their redundant churches and chapels, and prices started to rise. It was common for a run-down church to fetch £500,000 to £1 million in central London in the late 1980s.

During the early 1990s, old church buildings had fallen out of vogue, mainly because of increased prices and the high cost of conversion. Now, agents report an increase in demand, largely because of a shortage of good quality houses for sale in many parts of the country.

Churches, usually located in the centre of towns and villages, are often interesting historical buildings, many with exposed beams, stone columns, arched Gothic windows and vaulted ceilings, and masses of light and space.

Most churches and chapels coming up for sale date from the Victorian period. Churches which are Grade I or Grade II* listed for their architectural merit are protected and cannot be converted or adapted.

Village chapels often have gardens and can make superb homes. Larger churches in inner cities are usually sold to property developers, who turn them into flats, often retaining architectural features, such as marble altars and stained-glass windows.

The Methodist Church has sold 7,000 chapels since 1932. It takes valuations and advice from local surveyors and advertises the property through estate agents. Nearly 100 chapels are said to be for sale around the country. The Church of England disposed of 1,453 churches between 1969 and 1996; about 106 of these were converted into homes. These days, however, the number of churches for sale has diminished.

Stuart Deacon, of the Church Commissioners, says: "Not every church building is suitable for conversion. A church which is away from other habitation might not be suitable for someone to live in: an



Graham Meehan, a property developer, in one of the bedrooms of a home built inside the former All Saints Church in north London

inner-city church might be more appropriate." The process of change to residential use involves public consultation, so the sale of a church can take several years. "Churches vary widely. Some churches in central London have sold for more than £1 million, others fetched negligible amounts," Mr Deacon says.

Two-thirds of the money raised after paying sale costs, including marketing expenses, goes towards funding the living Church, and one-third to the Church's Conservation Trust. Both the Methodists and the Church of England sell with restrictive covenants against use involving alcohol, sex shops, dance halls, amusements or gambling. The disturbance or removal of any grave, tombstone or memorial on the property is also prohibited.

Falling congregations and the high cost of maintaining old church buildings are the main reasons given by the Church of England for their disposal. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, says it

has opened more churches in England than it has closed since 1900.

Sometimes, a parish will sell off part of a church for conversion to fund renovation work on the rest of the building. The west end of the Church of St Saviour, in Walton Street, west London, is for sale at £1.7 million through Knight Frank, with outline planning consent for conversion to a 6,000 sq ft house. The rest of the church, with the chapel and altar, will continue to be used for worship.

The Raven Group of developers, with architects Midelton Caradoc-Hodgkins, have designed a house for the west end of the Victorian-Gothic church, built in 1840 by George Bassett. They plan to insert a sound-proofed wall dividing the church building in two.

Their design, which can be visualised via a computer model, incorporates a grand entrance hall with a sweeping staircase up to a gallery, three reception rooms, five bedrooms and a roof terrace overlooking Harrods. The price for their completed house is £2.7 million. • Knight Frank, 0171-639 8171.

THE CHURCH DEVELOPER

GRAHAM MEEHAN, a property developer, has converted 20 redundant churches into more than 100 flats and houses in London and Bristol since the early 1980s.

His projects, mainly in north London, include the United Reform Church in Highgate, St Clement's in Islington, and St Stephen's in Ealing, west London.

Mr Meehan, who runs the development company Maracore, paid £150,000 for his first church, the 18th-century United Reform Church in Highgate in 1982. He spent £600,000 converting the 10,000 sq ft building into 16 flats, which sold from £50,000 each for two bedrooms, mostly to young professionals. They are now worth about £175,000.

Neil Squires, a design consultant, who has worked with Mr Meehan since the early 1980s, says the trend in church conversions is for bigger, more expensive units. "Fifteen years ago, people tried to cram as many flats as possible into a church. Now,

the approach is to create a smaller number of larger, more upmarket homes," he says.

Their latest project, All Saints, Tytherton Road, Tufnell Park, is an example of the new generation of church conversions. The terrace of eight three and four-storey houses, within the 1820s church, each with its own landscaped garden, has almost sold out in less than a month.

TRADITIONALLY built with brick load-bearing walls, Bath stone dressings and slate roofs, the original building has exposed ceiling timbers, arched windows and stone columns. There are now 12ft-high ceilings, floors and doors in pitched pine and designer kitchens.

Prices of the two unsold houses are £260,000 for a 12-year lease on a three-bedroom house, and £295,000 for four bedrooms.

• Graham Meehan, 0171-491 3141, can also be contacted through the agent Strickley & Kent, 0171-267 2653.

EARLSFIELD ROAD, SW18 Freehold £400,000
 Close to the west side of Wandsworth Common, a large semi-detached Victorian house set back from the road with off-street parking and a 27.5m (90ft) south facing garden. 5 beds, 2 baths, 2 recep, study, kitchen, conservatory, cinema, K'ette. WANDSWORTH: 0181-871 3033

SWISS COTTAGE NW3
 An elegant detached period house which has been renovated to provide six individually designed apartments with a six year NHBC guarantee. New 999 year leases. Prices from £242,500 to £495,000. ST JOHN'S WOOD: 0171-722 5556

CLARGES STREET, Mayfair, W1
 Newly refurbished, a bright, raised ground floor flat in a well-situated, portered block close to Berkeley Square. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, reception room, kitchen. Lease to 2063 £328,000. MAYFAIR: 0171-406 0055

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HAMPSHIRE - Stockbridge Price Guide: £225,000
 On the edge of the village, an attractive Georgian house, 4 beds, 2 baths, 2 recep, hall/study, cinema, kitchen, a/c annex with bed, bath, recep/kitchen, 2 garages, enclosed mature gardens. WINCHESTER: 01962 863131

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WILTSHIRE - Wardour Castle, Tisbury To let unfurnished
 A south facing apartment of approx 250sqm (3,000 sq ft) in an historic house set in about 20 ha (50 acres) in an idyllic rural situation. Sympathetically restored, the apartments are of the highest quality with classical minimalist interiors, English oak floors, marble bathrooms, Czech & Spiegle fittings, German kitchen appliances and comprehensive security systems. The grounds are being restored to the original designs of Woods and Capability Brown. COUNTRY LETTINGS: 01256 398004

EDWARDS SQUARE, W8 Freehold Price Guide: £1,100,000
 Facing west, a gracious end-of-terrace Georgian house with elegant, well-proportioned rooms and an artist's studio at the end of the garden. 4 beds, 2 baths, 3 recep, kitchen, cellar, utility rm, 2 clinics, front and rear gardens, access to square gardens. KENSINGTON: 0171-727 0705

WIMBLEDON SW19
 Well placed for Wimbledon B&T and underground stations, an attractive semi-detached Victorian family house with a 12.2m (40ft) south west facing garden. 5 beds, bath, shower rm, recep, kitchen, cinema, cellar, front and rear gardens. Freehold £325,000. WIMBLEDON: 0181-944 7172

HAMPSHIRE
 Close to the southern edge of the New Forest. A country house with grazing land set in a rural position. 3 beds, 2 baths, 3 recep, kitchen, utility rm, 2 garages, swimming pool, 3 loose boxes, various outbuildings, garden & paddocks. About 2 ha (5 acres). Price Guide: £339,500. LYMBINGTON: 01590 677233

More and more Britons are looking to the Caribbean islands as the ideal place to find a retirement or second home

Where to buy a slice of tropical paradise

JAMAICA was Noël Coward's favourite Caribbean island. He bought a home there. Firefly, high on a cliff on the island's northwest coast. It was there that he entertained British royalty and Hollywood VIPs, and he was buried in its garden in 1973.

The Caribbean has long been a popular destination for Britons. With regular direct flights from the UK to Barbados, Antigua and Jamaica, these British-orientated islands are the most popular for those seeking a retirement or second home in the Caribbean. They also attract the most property development.

JAMAICA

This is one of the largest of the Caribbean islands, and one of the most beautiful, with its lush mountains and white sand beaches, surrounded by a translucent blue sea. Foreign investment in property on the island is encouraged, but it is no tax haven.

At St. Ann's Bay on the north coast, a new resort - including two international hotels and a 27-hole championship golf course - is being built on the 800-acre Drax Hall Estate. A 100-berry marina and a yacht club are planned.

Villa plots overlooking the golf course and the sea cost from £45,000 to £75,000 for a half-acre plot. A luxury three-bedroom house can be built for about £150,000, excluding the cost of the land.

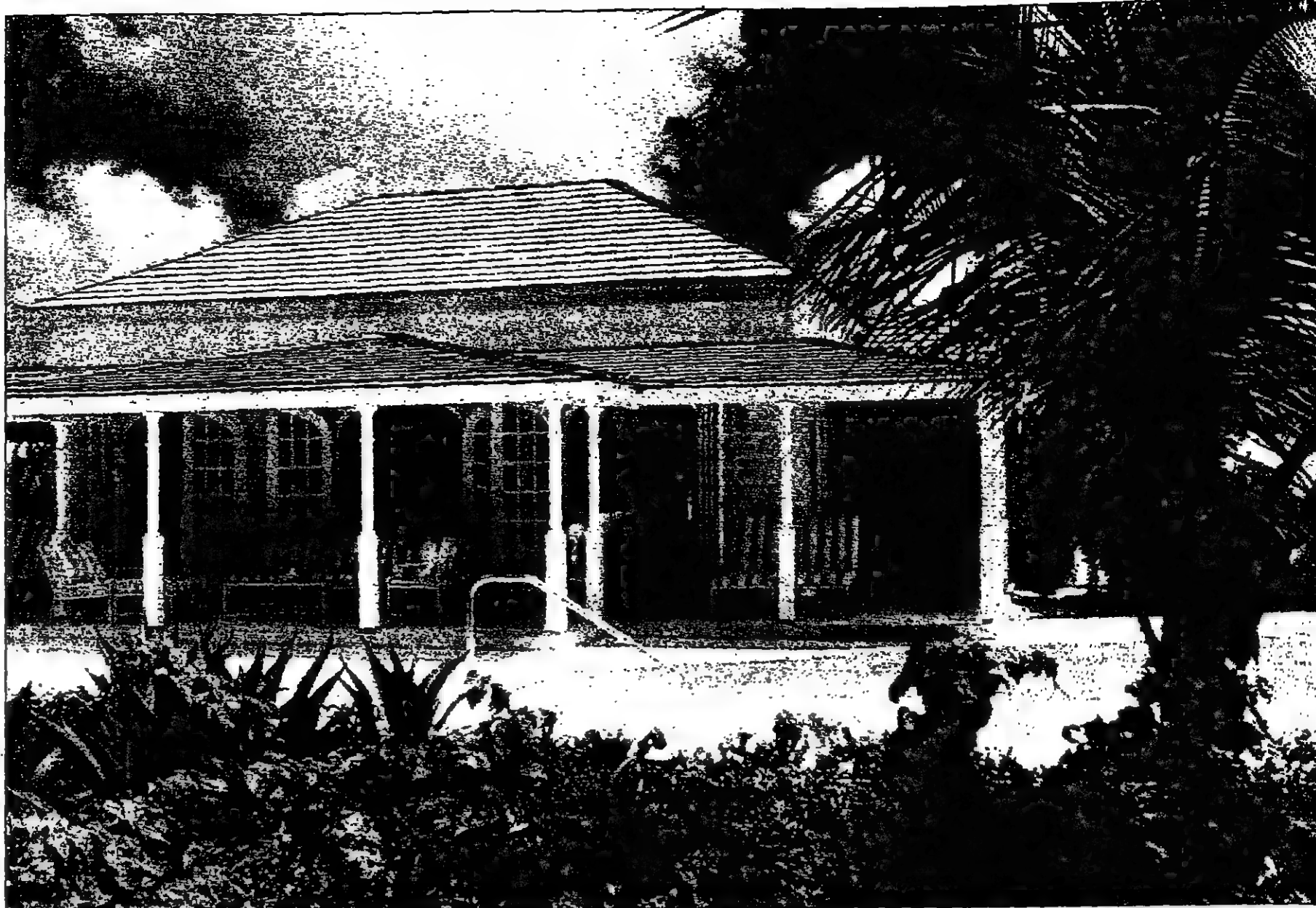
Property transfer tax is paid by the vendor, at 7.5 per cent of the sale price. Buying costs are about 4 to 5 per cent of the purchase price. Larger, detached houses on the island, such as those at the Drax Hall Estate, can be let for £2,000 to £3,000 a week in the peak winter season. Rental returns are free of local taxes for the first seven years of ownership.

BARBADOS

This is the most sophisticated of the Caribbean islands - and the most expensive. An enviable climate and friendly population are the obvious attractions of an island swathed in sugar cane and blessed with some of the Caribbean's finest beaches.

The property market is relatively stable, although prices are rising as building land becomes scarce. You could buy a one-bedroom flat there for under £100,000, but most homes cost a great deal more. Houses costing more than £1 million are common at Sandy Bay and St. James on the island's wealthy west coast, an area scattered with golf courses and expensive hotels.

Barbados has a new leisure home development, the Royal Westmoreland, which has been created on 480 acres of former sugar plantation, in the hills above St. James. The British-owned development includes 350 luxury houses around an 18-hole golf course, designed by Robert Trent



The Royal Westmoreland development, Barbados, has 350 luxury houses and an 18-hole golf course built on a former sugar plantation, with prices from £250,000

Jones Jr. Sixty houses with views over the golf course have been built and sold, mainly to British buyers.

"Most of our purchasers are buying with a view to retirement. The average age is 55. Some are looking to retire here, others will spend the winter in their property. Most buy for the sports facilities and the outdoor life," says Julian Rooney, the managing director.

The former tennis star Virginia Wade recently paid £330,000 for a

two-bedroom house here. Other famous owners at Royal Westmoreland include David Lloyd and Ian Woosnam, who spent £1.3 million last year on a five-bedroom villa overlooking the 18th fairway.

Prices start at £250,000, which buys a two-bedroom villa close to the clubhouse, with sun terraces and sea views. The detached courtyard villas, costing from £450,000, have three bedrooms, marble floors, coral stone walls, a private pool and landscaped gardens.

There are also a few larger, two-storey colonial-style houses in half an acre. Built around leafy inner courtyards, with up to five bedrooms and a guest cottage, these cost from £770,000 to more than £1 million.

On-site facilities include a tennis centre and a large leisure complex, with swimming pools, spa bath, a gymnasium and a health clinic.

There is no capital gains tax to pay on any profits when you sell your Barbadian home. There is a property transfer tax of 10 per cent of the purchase price incurred on buying and 8 per cent on selling, plus stamp duty and lawyers' fees of about 2 per cent. However, because of a Government concession, property tax is not levied on the sale or purchase of property at Royal Westmoreland.

ANTIGUA

This is the largest of the Leeward Islands, has a dry climate and an arid landscape, scattered with forts and anchorages, including English

Harbour, where Nelson once sheltered the British Fleet.

During the 1980s the island, with its 365 beaches, flanked by palm trees and turquoise seas, was at the hub of the Caribbean's building boom. Following the world recession, the property market slumped.

Prices start at £250,000, which buys a two-bedroom villa close to the clubhouse, with sun terraces and sea views. The detached courtyard villas, costing from £450,000, have three bedrooms, marble floors, coral stone walls, a private pool and landscaped gardens. Some of the island's best value property is at the new Jolly Harbour Marina on the west coast, near the capital, St. John's. More than 500 waterfront homes have been built by the Swiss developer Alfred Erhart alongside canals or open waterways. Prices range from £76,000 to £96,000 for an air-conditioned two-storey, two-bedroom terraced house, with private jetty and mooring.

There are also a few prime beachfront plots available for villas built to individual specification, priced from £125,000.

A three-bedroom villa with three bedrooms, garage and marina berth can be built for £340,000, including the cost of the land, says Simon Malster of agent Investors in Property.

The 500-acre development has a shopping centre and a sports complex, with tennis, squash and

swimming pool, two beaches and an 18-hole golf course.

On the south coast of Antigua is St. James's Club, once owned by the entrepreneur Peter de Savary. John German, of agent Cluttons, is asking £422,000 for Ronaldshay Villa, a luxury three-bedroom

house with three bathrooms, set high on St. James's Hill with panoramic views. It comes with a cooling verandah to let the breeze waft through the high-ceilinged rooms, an acre of tropical gardens and its own swimming pool.

Service charges at the St. James's Club are around £5,000 a year. Letting your home will help offset running costs. Typically, a large detached villa at the St. James's Club will fetch £3,000 a week in rental income in the winter months.

There is no income tax or capital gains tax to pay on Antigua. Allow about 5 per cent of the purchase price to cover stamp duty and legal fees.

TURKS & CAICOS

The English-speaking island of Providenciales, the largest of the Turks & Caicos Islands, is famous for its beaches and clear water. It

offers good scuba diving and fishing, year-round sunshine and all the advantages of a tax haven.

One of the few remaining British Crown Colonies, at the southern end of the Bahamas chain, the island can be reached in 90 minutes by plane from Miami, or direct from Milan.

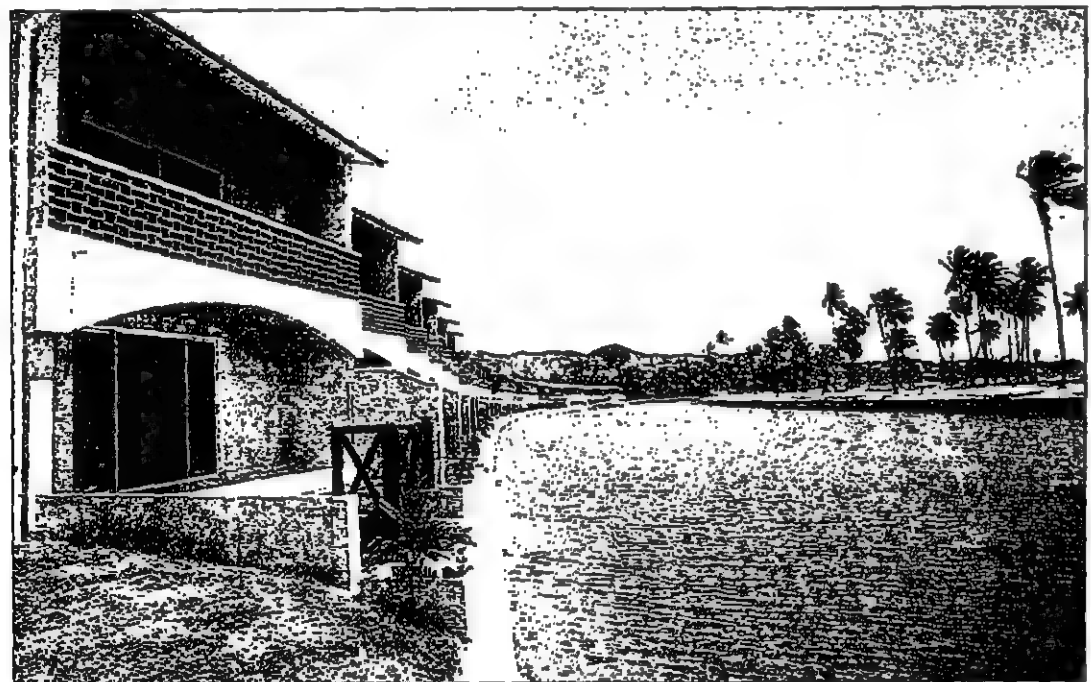
Richmond Hill Estates is selling villa plots at Grace Bay Hills, close to the island's 18-hole championship golf course, from £13,333 to £56,000 for a third of an acre. There is also a range of three and four-bedroom villas available at Turtle Bay Cove, priced from £176,666. Houses on the beach are more expensive. Expect to pay at least £650,000 for a three to four-bedroom house, with maid's quarters, private pool and exotic landscaped gardens. Cluttons is the British agent.

There are also uninhabited outer islands for sale in whole or part. Raw land starts at £50,000 an acre. Some of the islands have underground springs and wells, others will need desalination plants.

Those contemplating a move to a Caribbean island might also consider renting a home. A three-bedroom place, a short distance from the beach can be rented from £1,300 a month for a year.

CHERYL TAYLOR

Drax Hall Estate, 001 809 972 2438 (Jamaica); Investors in Property, 0181-905 5511 (Antigua); Royal Westmoreland, 0171-355 5028 (Barbados); Cluttons, 0171-408 1010 (Antigua and Providenciales).



The Jolly Harbour Marina, Antigua, has two-bedroom terraced houses from £76,000 to £96,000

EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION - THE TIMES

Three cases of 10 year old whisky to be won

Today *The Times* brings you the opportunity to buy tickets for one of the most important events in the world of bridge, The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship, and the chance to win a superb case of The Macallan whisky.

There are three first prizes, each consisting of 12 bottles of The Macallan 10 Year Old malt whisky, worth approximately £260 a case.

There are also 40 runners-up prizes of Macallan playing cards and miniature bottles of The Macallan 10 Year Old.

The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship is regarded by many as the most prestigious event in the bridge calendar and the one which all players most aspire to win.

Now in its 26th year, the championship will be held next Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at the White House Hotel, Albany Street, London. Thirty-two of the world's top names will be playing, including bridge's most famous player, Omar Sharif. Last year's winners were Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meekstroth from America.

In addition to the title itself and prize money totalling £10,000, competitors will be playing for the championship trophy and a case each of The Macallan which is renowned for its full-bodied flavour and distinctively mellow taste.



HOW TO ENTER

Call the hotline number below to book your tickets quoting *The Times*. You will automatically be entered into a free prize draw. If you already have tickets, you can enter the draw by ringing the hotline and leaving your name and address.

The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship will be held at The White House Hotel, Albany Street, London NW1.

Dates of the tournament are: January 22-23-24
Prices are as follows:
To attend all sessions: £35
Wednesday, 5.30pm-11pm: £12.50
Thursday, 12noon-4pm: £12.50; 5.30pm-11pm: £12.50
All day Thursday £20
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CHANGING TIMES

SELLING POINTS FITTED KITCHEN

For some people, choosing a fitted kitchen can rank with those other high-stress events of getting married or moving house.

Whereas once you might have impressed the neighbours with a bank of sagging fitting units, today everyone has them, and people expect to find a better kitchen than theirs when they move house.

Bearing in mind that most people refit the kitchen only about every ten years, selecting from the ever-expanding range of materials, colours and styles is tiring. Should you opt for a traditional look or country cottage? High-tech or maybe stainless steel for an industrial feel?

And if you go for one of today's favourite styles, such as the cool-colour Shaker look, will it become passe? Will the fad for hanging your chairs on the wall have worn off in five years' time when you may want to sell?

Although the choice of kitchen is highly personal, there are styles that are widely popular and less likely to date. Traditional and country cottage kitchens in pine and oak are perennial favourites, say retailers, while at the higher priced end of the market, the hand-painted look also has a long-lasting appeal, say companies such as Smallbone of Devizes.

If you are selling your house it is not just the style and colour of the cupboards that will catch the eye of potential buyers, or whether you have any of those fiendishly clever little units that swivel out to become ironing



Will the fad for Shaker-style fitted kitchens have worn off when you come to sell?

boards and dining tables. Quality brand name electrical appliances are just as important. But a cheap oven thrown in as part of a special offer package is unlikely to impress.

Fitted kitchens may now be expected as standard by househunters but, say some estate agents, a new kitchen with up-to-the-minute appliances will top up your property's asking price.

If you want to ensure you are ahead of the field in your choice of kitchen, you should opt for more colour variants and paint finishes, such as the antique or distressed look,

which are tipped as the coming thing.

Magnet, for example, is soon to launch a home-painting service so that its customers can have exactly the effect they desire. The company has also introduced kitchen styles with interchangeable colour panels, so that you can ring the changes.

Among other kitchen companies, the unfitted fitted look is the way forward, provided you have a large enough space. Dressers, island units with chopping boards, and a ceiling rack for your pans and

bunches of dried flowers, can be used to give a more individual touch to your kitchen.

However, the stainless steel and high-tech styles are likely to remain more for city dwellers and the Shaker look may peak but is here to stay, say retailers.

An average spend on a kitchen at a high street or DIY store, such as Homebase, is £2,000 to £4,000, plus about £1,000 for installation. The price of a hand-painted Smallbone kitchen starts at about £7,500.

CLARE STEWART

PROPERTY NEWS

■ TWO OF only five Lutyns' built townhouses in London are for sale as one residence. Extending to some 40 rooms in total, the houses in Great Peter Street, SW1, were built for the Honourable Francis McLaren MP and his sister, Lady Norman, in 1911. They were most recently used as the headquarters of the Royal Development Commission. The asking price is about £3.25 million. Contact Knight Frank (0171-824 8171) or King Storer & Co (0171-493 4933).

■ THE provisions of the 1996 Housing Act will come into force on February 28. All new tenancies will automatically be Assured Shorthold Tenancies, unless rents are more than £25,000 per year. Landlords will be able to repossess properties after a tenant has defaulted on two months' rent, instead of three, and also to evict tenants for anti-social behaviour.

■ THE sales office for the 46 one and two-bedroom luxury apartments being built by Chelsea Village plc in the grounds of Chelsea Football Club in southwest London opened this week. The apartments should be finished this summer, and will include underground parking. Prices from £155,000 to £220,000. Contact Savills (0171-385 2400).

■ THE strengthening of the pound has stimulated demand for property overseas, according to Hamptons International. Meanwhile, prices on the Continent have remained stagnant. David King of Hamptons says: "From a low point of about £7.5 to the pound, we are now looking at £9, making French property substantially better value to purchase."

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The Prostate

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1. The artery is clogged by deposits
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When a bird in the hand is worth £100,000

Keeping pigeons
has outgrown its
cloth-cap image

Every day in summer Molly Holt spends time at her cabin on an allotment next to her pigeon lofts. "I go there at six in the morning and come home at seven at night. It's idyllic," she says. "A little haven where I can be with the pigeons, watch them flying around and listen to their cooing. They are therapeutic."

Ms Holt, of Wakefield, West Yorkshire, is one of about 80,000 pigeon racing enthusiasts, many of whom will be flocking to Blackpool this weekend for the 25th British Homing World Show of the Year at the Winter Gardens.

But what is it that inspires someone to keep pigeons? Ms Holt discovered the joys of keeping pigeons ten years ago. "I used to be scared of them, but a friend kept pigeons and his interest transferred to me. And once you have got the bug it's hard to get away from it," she says.

Ms Holt, or Red Hen as she is known to her readers in *British Homing World*, a weekly publication for pigeon enthusiasts, keeps 50 birds of varying breeds, including the racing varieties Herman, Busschaert and Verhey. She also keeps a few fanbirds, a breed that many people have for their appearance rather than racing ability.

All Ms Holt's birds have their own nest boxes. In a number of homemade lofts (a new loft measuring 18ft x 6ft, which could hold up to 80 pigeons, would cost about £700-£800).

During the racing season, from April to September, she spends more than £10 a week on them, which includes food — maize, tic beans, maple peas and wheat — and the fee for each bird she enters in a race (last year it cost £70 per pigeon). Each bird is also vaccinated against paramyxovirus, a disease that can leave the pigeons debilitated.

Ms Holt's birds all have a name. Her favourite is Conqueror, because he has raced so well. Another bird originally called Ayatit ("I hate it")



Molly Holt, known to many of Britain's 80,000 pigeon racing enthusiasts as Red Hen, with one of the 50 birds at her lofts in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. "They're therapeutic," she says.

because of his stubbornness, had a name change when he won a race. He is now Aluvit. She has never bought any pigeons; she has either been given pigeons or bred them. The prices normally range from £10 to more than £100,000 for a good racing pigeon. Ms Holt says that pigeon magazines carry adverts selling them and clubs often hold pigeon auctions.

This month is breeding time in Ms Holt's lofts. "I put the cock and hen together and

about seven or eight days later the female will lay an egg. They make very good parents and can stay together for life. They take turns to sit on the egg. Eighteen to 20 days after laying, the egg hatches.

The baby is called a squab, and its initial diet is pigeon's "milk", which is fed the parents have eaten and then regurgitated. Ms Holt says. Five or six days after birth she puts a registration

ring on the squab's right foot so that it can be identified for the rest of its life. Pigeons normally live for about 14-15 years but can go on past 20.

At one month old, she takes the bird from its parents and a couple of weeks later starts training it for racing. At first, the pigeon is taken a few hundred yards from the loft, but gradually the distance is built up. Her birds start racing from six months old and can go on until they are nine years. Distances covered in races

vary from 50 to 200 miles. "Nobody really knows what brings them home. That is what is so fascinating about the sport," Ms Holt says.

Paul Smith, a pigeon consultant, got the bug for keeping pigeons when he was eight years old. His father and grandfather both raced them. The birds were in an old shed at the bottom of the garden. I used to sit for hours with them," he says.

Mr Smith kept pigeons as pets for about four years before starting to race them. As his passion for them grew he became both a racer and a breeder, and has also entered them at shows.

In two weeks, four of Mr Smith's pigeons will be taking

on hundreds of others from all over the world in a 375-mile, \$1 million race from Gariop Dam, near Colesberg, north to Sun City — somewhat dispelling the cloth-cap image of pigeon keeping.

In Blackpool this weekend, nearly 2,500 pigeons will be exhibited in 33 showing classes, including young and old pigeons, racing pigeons and cocks and hens. The judges look for alert eyes, shape of head, good feather condition and size and stance of the body.

There will also be about 160 trade stands selling anything from feed to racing clocks.

Mr Smith has been going to the show since it began 25 years ago. "It is a great

opportunity for fanciers to buy whatever they need and it's a wonderful introduction for those who have never been involved in keeping pigeons," he says.

CHRISTIAN DYMOND

● *British Homing World: Show of the Year, Winter Gardens, Blackpool, Today, 9am-6pm and tomorrow, 9am-3pm. £2.50, children and OAPs £1.*

● *Royal Pigeon Racing Association, 0452 713322.*

● *Paul Smith (Pigeon Expert), 0129 657519.*

● *Publications: British Homing World (weekly) 42p; Pigeon Racing Gazette (monthly) £1.20; Racing Pigeon (weekly) 55p; Racing Pigeon Picorial (monthly) £1.95.*

A VET WRITES

Q Our cat is two years old and, since a kitten, has vomited undigested food about once a month. He does not look ill. Please comment.

A He may be a greedy cat who sometimes bites off more than his stomach can accommodate. Or, he may have intermittent fur balls and a partial blockage of his intestine. Discovering the cause of an intermittent malfunction is always difficult. Start keeping a diary. Make notes of when he vomited, time of day, day of week, how long after food, last meal and drink. Keep this up for three months, then check your records. If you don't reach a conclusion see your vet, and take the diary with you.

Q We have five guinea pigs — granny, father, mother and two youngsters. From time to time one or other develops an intense itch, caused by a mite. Bathing in medicated shampoo helps and we disinfect their pens regularly, but cannot get rid of the parasite. Any ideas?

A Guinea pigs are plagued by the mite *Tritaxia caviae*, which is often present on healthy youngsters without causing any skin problems. If they become unwell for any reason — or when pregnancy and birth put extra stress on a female cavy — the mite population increases and the itch starts, and sometimes causes a serious loss of weight. Medicated baths and a thorough cleaning of the cages will control the mites, but a few are left behind. A relatively new treatment involves injecting a parasiticide which is excreted through the skin and reaches parts other shampoo may not.

Q Glendower, our Pembroke Welsh Corgi, sleeps on his back, four legs in the air. Why does he choose this position. Comfort or display?

A A one-word explanation might be contentment. When the soft part of his abdomen is exposed he is demonstrating confidence while in a vulnerable position. It's an efficient "heat-loss" posture, too. He is exposing as much surface area as possible to allow body heat to disperse.

JAMES ALLCOCK

● Readers should write to The Times Vet, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 6UN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility.

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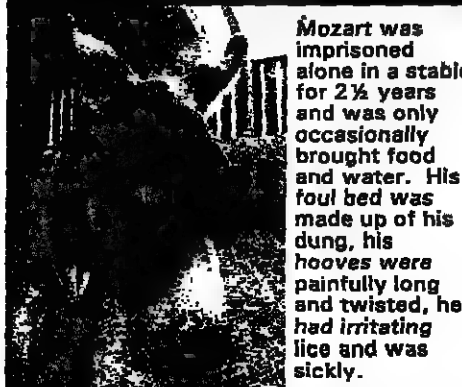
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MISCELLANEOUS

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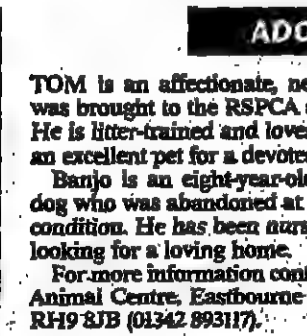
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THE CATS PROTECTION LEAGUE



Tom loves being handled



Banjo is back to health

A pizza face take away

ALTERNATIVELY SPEAKING

I am a sucker for before-and-after pictures. What could be more seductive than a photograph of a pizza face pitted with saucer-shaped scars and red pustules replaced by the same face without a mark?

Such pictures litter the brochure for Oxy-Peel, a range of skin-care products that claim to "biologically exfoliate and oxygenate the skin, gradually removing the blemished layers which are replaced by healthy skin", so curing acne. All this might sound like a beauty column rather than an alternative remedy. But the woman chemist behind the treatment, Sujata Jolly, says her patients are those for whom conventional medicine has failed, some over 20 years.

She dismisses conventional treatments, whether over-the-counter preparations such as anti-bacterial skin-washing creams, soaps and lotions and preparations using sulphur or benzoyl peroxide. "Most of them overdry the skin, making it highly sensitive and red. Benzoyl peroxide burns the surface of the skin, leaving a plastic-like film. The patient thinks the skin is greasy when, in fact, it has dried up."

Nor are antibiotics the answer, she says. Drugs such as tetracycline work by reducing skin bacteria and inflammation. They reduce the production of sebum and limit the amount of keratin blocking the glands' ducts, and clear secondary infection. Doctors may also prescribe retinoic acid, a vitamin A derivative rubbed on the skin, or anti-microbial treatments.

About 800,000 prescriptions a year are issued for Minocin, one of the most commonly used drugs.

The problems with these antibiotics, especially the strong ones such as Roaccutane, are chiefly to do with side-effects," Ms Jolly says. Doubts were raised about Minocin in January last year after a report in the *British Medical Journal* linked the drug with two deaths. 11 cases of an arthritis-like condition and 16 cases of liver damage. Conventional doctors and dermatologists largely dismissed the report.

Ms Jolly's solution is two-part. I saw her at the Hale Clinic in Regent's Park, north-west London, where she began by brushing on a foaming milk cleanser, removed later with tepid water. She said she could identify my skin's state



Patient with Oxy-Peel mask

through my make-up, but refused to label the severity of the problem, saying that all skin conditions are different.

She then applied a mask which exfoliates, thanks to its ingredient of willow tree bark extract, possibly unblocking the ducts. Then a mysterious, unnamed agent introduces oxygen, killing the bacteria. The treatment also speeds up skin regeneration, she claims, and leaves behind a protective coating which prevents further spots.

Ms Jolly retains an Eastern mystery about the ingredients for the products made by Depêche Mode Laboratories by herself and her husband, Ramon.

I was left with my mask, lying on the couch in a darkened room listening to music for 35 minutes. Then Ms Jolly

removed the mask to examine whether I needed further treatment: a second "amino acid and enzyme" mask which, she claims, can help improve patchy pigmentation, and post-acne scarring, or an "alkaline" peel which softens pitted acne scars and crusty skin.

In the event, I needed just the first mask. "See for yourself. Look in the mirror," she said. Yes, my skin did seem lighter and brighter. She gave me a bottle of the foaming milk to take away, a zap-it bottle to treat spots, and "Revitalize cream special" to moisturise.

How I hope it works. I have tried and abandoned antibiotics in the past for the reasons which Ms Jolly outlined, and am living witness to the reddening and drying effects of many over-the-counter treatments.

Following the treatment my skin does seem less spotty, but it is early days and Ms Jolly says I need several more visits.

My only caveat is the complete dismissal of such treatment by conventional experts. Dr Ian White, consultant dermatologist at St Thomas' Hospital, London, has never heard of Oxy-Peel.

"There are so many products like this about," he says. "Everything from shark bile to tea-tree oil. The fact is that you need data and trials to prove this, whereas most of these alternative remedies rely on anecdote."

● For details of the nearest therapist, call 01628 74044.
● Sujata Jolly, Hale Clinic, 7 Hale Green, London W1N 3EE (0171-631 0150).

Oxy-Peel

■ What it is: skincare products that biologically exfoliate the skin and, it is claimed, heal acne, avoiding the need for conventional skin treatments that have side effects.
■ Advantages: no known side effects and pleasant to experience.
■ Disadvantages: no clinical trials and dismissed by conventional doctors.
■ Cost: £40 for a session of 75 minutes.

I may seem trivial when compared to other people's misfortunes, but I am in a quandary — I have nobody to leave my money to.

This was brought home recently when I was asked to nominate three people who would get my death-in-service benefit after I die, thereby bestowing four times my annual salary on whoever I might suggest.

And then there is my house, the collection of dolls' houses and the Jack Russell terrier, who is beyond price.

Three of my cousins died in accidents in their twenties and the newspapers are full of people who fall off mountains, are electrocuted by the lawn mower or meet other untimely ends. So it seemed sensible, therefore, not to put it off any longer, but to make a will and not to leave my loved ones squabbling over my estate.

As I have no children, the obvious choice for a legacy would be the man in my life, but since we tend to go everywhere together and his driving rather calls to mind making a will, it would seem much more sensible to have a Plan B.

Where there's a will, they want be in it

PERSONAL LIFE

It is Plan B that is the problem. It is not that I do not have any relatives — being half-Irish I have droves of them — but who is the most deserving?

I made a list of nieces (five) and nephews (three) and other young relations, but then started crossing out those who had failed to fit my inheritance guidelines. The impatient ones were the first to go. The pen also went through the niece who sneered at my collection of dolls' houses ("but what are they for?"), the niece who refused to turn her music down ("you're just old") and the nephew who said books were boring.

Another line went through the young relative, an otherwise lovely girl, who recently received a police caution for smoking what my father insists on calling "marry-jew-arna". What she obviously needs is less money, not more, since we now know what she spends it on.

Then I came to a young niece I

was particularly fond of, realised I had not spoken to her for a while and rang to ask if she had liked her Christmas present.

"Oh, yah, lovely, thank you Auntie Mary." There was a pause. Then she said: "What was it again?"

She had received a car from her mother and a mobile telephone from her father and my carefully chosen gift must have seemed paltry by comparison. The best thing for her is not a large bequest, but a good slapping and the sooner the better.

Two of the nieces also have rich parents, and since there are only two of them they can both look forward to about a million quid each — and that is at today's prices.

My family has been obsessed by wills, their own and other people's, since Uncle Arthur was killed in Tobruk when a Naafi tea urn fell on him.

His gravestone inscription said "killed in action" and since he was running for a consignment of Red Cross doughnuts, I suppose there was some truth in it.

Being Irish, a nurse and a believer, my mother has no fear of death and often talks about "when I'm gone", usually while she is sitting by the fire smoking her pipe.

I tell her not to worry because only the good die young. She has talked about her own will for so long that it has become a family joke ("I'll grease the stairs to-night", etc.). The will is also changed on a regular basis, my sisters and I flitting through it from time to time according to the suitability of our boyfriends. I have had more comebacks than Gary Glitter.

This will neurosis has been

passed on. My eldest sister keeps hers on the bedside table, making it easily accessible and soon altered should anyone offend her.

She spends a fortune at the solicitor's. She is also a great housekeeper — gets divorced, keeps the house — so she won't be needing anything from me.

At the moment, if I die without a will, my earthly goods will automatically go (via the taxman) to my parents and, charming though they are, they have a large house and do not need the money. Thanks to compulsory sport and a decent private education, my four siblings are in the same position.

So what are we left with? Charity, I suppose. I dug out a table of charities that benefit from wills. The last annual count ran thus: the RNLI (£38 million); Imperial Cancer Research (£32

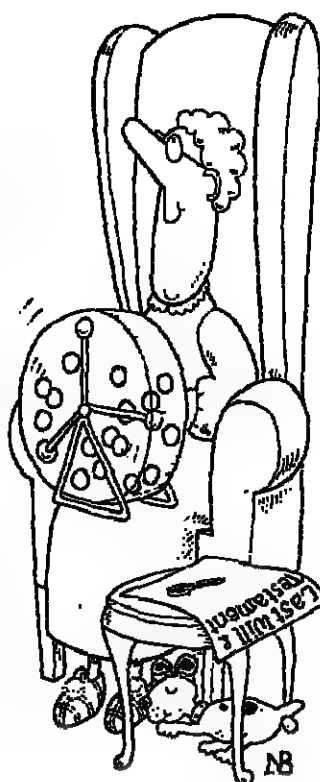
million); the Cancer Research Campaign (£32 million); the National Trust (£24 million) and the RSPCA (£23 million). Now, these are fine organisations, but I balk at the thought of my money disappearing into a large pot with lots of other people's.

I cannot leave it to Jumble (the Jack Russell) because I am against leaving money to individual animals and, as she only eats 50p-worth of food a day, the money would long outlast her.

So what I really want is for someone, some day, to think of me fondly and say, "Good old Auntie Mary, she helped me get to Cambridge, play the piano, made me what I am today, etc."

Ideally that someone should be a Jack Russell fan who likes dolls' houses. Applications should reach me before the appointment with Raymond Harris, my solicitor, on January 29.

MARY GOLD



What shall we do with mother?

The choice of who should care for an elderly parent is fraught with guilt, says Jill Parkin

The world was different in Eileen House's day. Home was a place where there was a woman looking after a husband, children and maybe an old parent, too. Increasingly today, those parents are in another sort of home. More than half a million of our old people are in long-stay care. Only a quarter of them have any say in a decision which is often fraught with guilt for their grown-up children.

Mrs House is 80. She looked after her widowed father at home for seven years, she moved house to help bring up some of her grandchildren, and she nursed her sick husband until she had to go to hospital herself. He died in a residential home three weeks after she became a long-stay resident in a nursing home.

"I always vowed I wouldn't be a burden on my children," she says. She came to Purley View Nursing Home in Purley, south London, in March last year. Her daughter, Geraldine Marsh, chose it.

"My house just isn't suitable for her disability. I've got steps, steps, steps. Mum can't be alone for very long, and she needs nursing," says Mrs Marsh. "Life is a struggle. If I didn't work we wouldn't be in very good shape. We have a two-bedroom house and my son lives at home."

They are a mother and daughter of our time — full of concern for each other, seeing each other a lot, but living in different worlds. As usually happens, the decision was taken at a moment of crisis. Mrs House was in hospital after a series of falls and a stroke. After discussion with her sisters, Mrs Marsh began to search for a suitable home.

She did a thorough job, seeing ten homes within visiting reach, and she chose well, but there is still a note of justification in her voice when she talks about the "steps, steps, steps". The guilt factor has grown almost as fast as the care industry which looks after our old people.

Joan Lewis of the Elderly Accommodation Council, an information service on accommodation for old people, says: "Relatives should remember that although the older person may not feel very happy at the idea of nine out of ten cases, if one chooses the right home, within a few months they are happier than they have been for ages. In a good home, they get companionship, cooking and cosseting. People really should not feel guilty. It's a bit like sending children to boarding school. They cry their eyes out when they go but by half-term they don't want to leave."

With Mrs House and her daughter there was no acrimony, but often the very subject is taboo, says Mrs Lewis. "Broaching such a move seems to cause almost as much embarrassment as discussing the possibility of a death in the family. The younger people will not bring the matter up for fear of upsetting their elders. And the older people will not admit that they cannot cope."

More and more families are having to broach the subject and make the decision. According to Lang and Buisson, healthcare market analysts, we now have 1,090,000 people aged over 85, compared with 472,000 in 1971. We have half a million old people in long-stay care, compared to 270,000 in 1970. We no longer all live near our parents.

Caring for elderly parents in



Eileen House and her daughter Geraldine Marsh in Purley View Nursing Home. "I vowed I wouldn't be a burden on my children," says Mrs House

the family has not completely died out, though it may not always go all the way to the grave. Nigel and Angela Best now live in her mother Betty's house in West Sussex. Mr Best, a builder, has turned a detached garage into a granny annex with alarms and intercom in case Betty, 75, has a fall.

"It has worked well for all of us," says Mrs Best, who is at home with two small children. "My mother had a stroke and was seriously considering selling up to buy sheltered accommodation. This house was far too big for her. We'd just had another baby and needed more space but couldn't afford it. My mother has helped us out and we're here for her. I don't know what will happen in the future, but I'm going to be at home until the younger child is at school, so the

arrangement should last a few years."

Peter and Clare Dobbs, who live a few miles away, are wondering if their similar arrangement may be coming to an end. They bought a large vicarage jointly with Mr Dobbs's parents, who lived in one part of it. "It meant they saw their grandchildren growing up, we knew they were okay, and we had babysitters, as well as a lovely house with a big garden for a relatively small mortgage," he says.

Then his mother died and his father, who is 81, has gradually deteriorated well beyond the babysitting point. "We used to have a rule," says Mrs Dobbs, "that it was two independent households coming and going as they pleased. It's different now." She, as the one who works from home, now shops for her

father-in-law and takes a hot meal in to him once a day. She does his washing and pays her cleaner for an extra hour a week to do his rooms.

"He has become our responsibility," she says. "From the point of view of his welfare, the arrangement is still a good one. I can't imagine that he would ever leave us for a residential home."

Mrs House, however, chose otherwise. "I accepted the decision because I wanted to save the burden on my children," she says. "I don't want them to be worn into the ground. When I was in my flat, Geraldine was phoning four times a day and she was coming in a lot. She was making herself ill and I didn't like watching her so concerned over me."

"Now she can get off the bus coming from work, see me, and get on the bus to go home. She comes twice a week. She was coming every day, but I stopped her because she was getting so worn out."

Long-stay care need not mean the end of family care, according to Jenny Stiles, the director of the Relatives Association, a charity for people with relatives in long-stay care. She says those running homes can help by making relatives feel more welcome.

"Many relatives feel they have failed the resident when they give up personal caring, even if no other course was possible," she says. "Often they have very mixed emotions: they want the home to look after the person, but they don't want to be cut out completely."

"Coming to a nursing home

wasn't what I wanted: I'd never thought about it," says Mrs House. "But Geraldine made sure I came to a good one. When the other residents go, I miss them. They are like an extended family, the people I stop to chat to on my way to and from my room."

The world has changed. An extended family was once children, parents and grandparents. Now it is the care industry as well.

● The Relatives Association (0171-916 6055) is a charity for those with an elderly relative or friend in long-term care. It offers advice and support, as well as working for better standards of care.

● The Elderly Accommodation Council (0181-742 1182) is a charity offering information on homes, sheltered and retirement housing. It does not recommend establishments or place people, but tries to fit the home to the person.

In death, we can find life

Ruth Gledhill on consolation and hope in an Anglo-Catholic Mass



AFTER six months living on Epsom Downs, my conscience was being prodded by various

newsletters and the occasional gift envelope dropped through the door by the faithful laity of the local parish church, and I could no longer ignore the call to check it out. It was with a sense of suburban joy that I surveyed the little red-brick, low-roofed mid-war church with its manicured lawn and cultivated flowerbeds in the heart of Nork, Surrey.

The gratification was short-lived, however, although the sense of belonging remained. Because, as is so often the case, behind the facade of serene normality, real life in the suburbs is as filled with tragedy, trauma, grief and sorrow as in the most outwardly deprived area of any inner city.

Our celebrant was the Rev William Gulliford, curate of the neighbouring parish. This was because for four years the parish of St Paul's has

been living with the terminal illness of the wife of the Rev Peter Brooks, its vicar. Elaine Brooks, like millions of others, had fought a brave battle against cancer, and at times it had seemed she might win. But at the last the disease gained the upper hand, and she died later that day.

Father Brooks, an Anglo-Catholic, had told me of his wife's illness over the telephone. My instant response had been that I could not attend the church that day, and certainly could not write about the service. In the circumstances, I could not conceive of awarding stars for anything, let alone for "spiritual high". I almost begged not to go. But he insisted. "Life must go on," he said. I felt ashamed for my lack of faith.

The service was remarkable. The liturgy, inspired by the Orthodox faith, was an adaptation of that used by monks at the Crawley Down monastery on the Surrey-Sussex border, an order devoted to prayers for unity. And while the Mass was based firmly in the Tractarian or Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England, many other traditions were also united there. For example, the choir had long since abandoned formal robes. Instead, they wore sweatshirts in the colour of red wine, the golden flame of the Holy Spirit emblazoned on the front. These sweatshirts, designed by the vicar, have

proved so popular that many in the congregation wore them as well.

The sanctuary lamp was lit that day in thanksgiving for the vicar's family. The atmosphere was muted and sorrowful, although hope was there. In the newsletter, Father Peter had written: "I will not be around today because Elaine's life is drawing close to the end." But the church would continue to be open, with daily morning prayer as usual and evening prayer if enough were interested.

The curate, Father William, sat before the high altar, the vicar's son Richard, as thurifer, swinging Byzantine incense. Through the sweet-smelling clouds of smoke, I could make out a woman MC and various acolytes, including two girl taperers, a boat boy and a crucifer. They had processed down the aisle as the congregation sang the Gloria, after a member of the choir led the confession and absolution. We heard readings from Isaiah and the Acts of the Apostles.

Today for us has a double-edged quality about it," Father William said in his sermon. "In the context of this time, this is not unlike a vigil, a time to reflect on the sadness, like the sadness of Good Friday, for all of us here. Yet we have just sung the Easter alleluia. The Christian song we sing every Sunday is the proclamation of the message of the resurrected Christ, who

comes and stands with us each week to be in our midst and affirm the message and resurrection of hope in Christ."

He preached on the Resurrection which followed Good Friday, and its message for all in the parish that day. "I cannot say I am pleased to be with you today. In normal circumstances I would not be here. But I am pleased to be able to do something for Father Peter and the family." It was the feast day of the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist, he said, and the collect had spoken of surrender. "The baptism of Christ is the symbol of Christ's surrender of himself. As we grow into our own baptisms we discover what it is to surrender ourselves."

Afterwards, we said the Creed and responded to the intercessory prayers. The congregation joined in the peace. Many surrendered to their tears but the Mass ended with communion and a sense that after so much pain, there could be peace.

● St Paul's Church, Warren Road, Banstead, Surrey SM7 1LG (01737 353849).

AT YOUR SERVICE

★ A five-star guide ★

VICAR: The Rev William Gulliford

ARCHITECTURE: Elegant simplicity ★★★★★

HOMILY: Father William said: "Death teaches us that the more deeply we enter into communion, so the more radically we must become detached and non-possessive." ★★★★★

LITURGY: Eastern and monastic. Beautiful. ★★★★★

MUSIC: Mixed choir led us in responses and hymns. ★★★★★

SPIRITUAL HIGH: Faith in the Resurrection. ★★★★★

AFTER-SERVICE CARE: Coffee, tea, home-made cake and hot buttered toast plus chance to meet near neighbours in the church hall next door. ★★★★★



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THE TIMES



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The move by the editor of *Country Life* to establish the birthday suit as the height of rural fashion is surely doomed

The only ray of sunshine in what is proving to be a bleak, drab winter out here on the eastern bulge of Britain has been the centenary edition of *Country Life* magazine. For a chap who spends much of his working day alone, with the only shapely things visible through the window being the round rumps of his carhorses or the vast bulk of his pig, the decision by the editor to allow the "girls in pearls" to be photographed from angles hitherto unthinkable has to be roundly applauded.

Where once the photographer was never allowed to focus on anything lower than a lady-like neckline, we are now treated to naked images which descend far enough down the body to make visible that place which is normally only ever exposed by bending labourers. In another image, a chunk of thigh draped in pearls is laid before us like an adorned loin of lamb on a butcher's slab.

Where will all this undress end? Will the advertisers follow *Country Life's* editorial example and, instead of showing views of country houses for sale, offer us a revealing snapshot of the cupboard

Where will all this undress end?

under the stairs? I am sorry if this appreciation does not comply with political correctness, but we lads in the country do not have the daily dose of such stuff which those who travel to work by London Underground can expect. We have none of those titillating rides past an escalatorful of Demi Moore. So allow us, please, this one indulgence, once a century.

Of course, this move by *Country Life* to establish the birthday suit as the height of rural fashion is doomed. Barbara Cartland has said, "It is very sad how everything has become sorid these days", and women's groups have described it as a huge step backwards. And now I must join in the condemnation. Not on the grounds of scantiness or immodesty, but because the sight of naked flesh at this time of the year, in the country, is a betrayal of everything the country life is truly about. Purely in the interests of research, I have taken my

magnifying glass to these pictures, and I can tell you with some certainty that nowhere on the bodies of these girls is to be seen one single goose pimple, not so much as a hair standing on end, no sign of softness of focus caused by the chattering of the girl's teeth sending shivers down the body. No, these are not "country" pictures at all; this is not "country" life, it is and cosy studio in the West End life. And I am jealous, because there have been days this winter when I would have

DOWN TO EARTH



PAUL HEINEY

would upset trading on the Amsterdam spot market, but I have always believed you can only extract the best from country life by doing things the hard way, no pain no gain, and so I home my

swapped even my pig for a few hours in the warmth. Life has been nothing but those few stolen moments between chopping wood, filling log baskets, lighting fires. Of course, I could switch on the central heating and use some of the vast oil reserves in the tank which, if suddenly allowed on to the open market,

more practised eye than mine would have realised that timber on which the leaves are still green and growing is unlikely to perform well in the fireplace. On strolling down the lane, I came across the stumps, oozing sap, from which these logs had been freshly cut. Had I been quick, I could have stuck my logs together, married them to the stump and that tree would still be flourishing. So now I cut and dry

axe and shun the override button on the heating timeswitch.

In nearly 15 years of chopping winter firewood, I have learnt a lot about timber and even more about the people who sell it. Dealers in firewood are quick to spot a sucker, and an early purchase of mine was from the farmer's son who promised me fine logs. They looked good, were nicely sawn, and arrived in what looked like a generous heap.

my own. At least one tree a year gets blown over, so I do not have to wrestle with my conscience about felling healthy stock. And, of course, windfalls are replaced with saplings. You can't do that with heating oil.

But chopping your own wood takes its toll on joints and limbs. Hands grow horny where the chill handle of the axe has been tightly gripped, fingers become blistered where the sledgehammer has slipped while trying to drive a wedge into a knotty chunk of oak, legs are bruised where hunks of timber have fallen from the saw horse.

Country life, at this time of year, is about pain. That there is no hint of suffering in the pictures of these undressed girls suggests that the editor has betrayed his true, country readers. So, I challenge him to take the girl who appears to be wearing nothing but an item of beaded jewellery about her thighs, remove even that bit of modest cladding, and if beneath it we can see a bruise I shall be satisfied that these are true country gals, and that this fine magazine is in safe hands.

Press a sweet song on the old apple tree

The ancient wassails draw attention to the decline of fruit orchards in Britain. Brian Pedley reports

For just one night a year, the creekside village of Stoke Gabriel kicks up one unholy racket. The Devon sky, unusually heavy with the threat of snow, is suddenly rent by shotgun firing blanks and the clanging of pots and pans. The local wading birds are startled into an indignant chorus. The cider flows and everyone sings and cheers, including the children. As with any wassail worthy of the name, the effect is magical.

Each year, around Twelfth Night, Stoke Gabriel people summon up ancient forces to ensure an abundant crop of apples in the orchard that has been theirs for centuries. This year's celebration took place last Saturday.

"The wassail goes back to when people were never quite sure that spring would follow winter," says Trudy Turrell, countryside interpretation officer with South Hams council. "As well as waking the trees from their winter slumber, the noise is meant to drive out evil spirits — the ones that stop the boughs from fruiting."

Once, the winter wassail was widespread throughout the fruit-growing areas of southern and western England. Then, every farm pressed its own cider. The heady autumnal draught often formed part of farm workers' wages. In Victorian times, a labourer consumed, on average, 130 gallons of cider in the course of a year.

In 1970, there remained 154,000 acres of orchards in the UK. But pressure for new houses and roads helped accelerate the decline. Orchards in villages and on the edge of towns became prime targets

for development. Newer sites were grubbed up as part of European Union attempts to reduce surpluses. By 1994, the acreage had fallen by more than half. Once there were 6,000 recorded varieties of apple, many unique to a single parish or farm. Now, only nine dominate in Britain. Ancient cider bays were bulldozed away, along with unimproved pasture that was rich in flowers, insects, birds and mammals. Consigned to distant memory was a vast library of apple lore.

The fruit, held to have magical qualities, was used in folk remedies and healing. Decorated apples were taken around houses as a sign of friendship and good health. The wassail varied only in the fine detail. In Sussex, they called it "wassailing" — in Cornwall it was the "wassale". Now it survives in only a handful of villages in Devon and Somerset. When we grubbed up our orchards, we lost much more than mere trees.

"Every farm and country house had its own orchard of mixed fruit trees for kitchen use," says Sue Clifford, founder and director of Common Ground, the London-based environmental charity. "But we let it all fall through our fingers."

Six years ago, the organisation launched a nationwide campaign to encourage the restoration of old orchards and to create new ones. A revived apple tradition was seen as vital. "We thought if we could reinvent any of it, we could reinvent the orchard as well. We have been astonished at the way people have responded," Ms Clifford says.

Common Ground has since seen more than 100 commu-

nity orchards established throughout the country, including the one that has been adopted in Stoke Gabriel. There, the wassail was reintroduced four years ago. Ms Turrell effectively grafted it on to the life of the village like the stem of some venerable English pipin. "People have been coming in droves ever since," she says.

The bumpy South Hams was famed for its cider. Exported to London, it fetched five shillings a barrel more than other pressings from Devon.

Native apple varieties such as Slap Me Girl, Tang Harvey, Brown's of Staverton, Pig's Nose and Devonshire Quarrenden survive — but only just.

Stoke Gabriel's own little acre boasts 35 carefully maintained fruit-bearing trees, some 20 varieties in all. The village vicar has been known to sit and compose his sermon beneath the blossom, while bees gorge themselves on the new pollen. Small children go there to count the weevils and bugs and to learn the apple-growing ways of their forebears. Local scouts harvest the apples and sell them to a nearby commercial cider-maker. Bridal groups pose there. After funerals, it is the perfect quiet place. "It is a true community orchard," says Ms Turrell.

"Every year we teach children the wassail song and the school chooses a wassail queen. This year, we have two because one of the little girls wanted to be with her friend. But first, we also teach the children the importance of caring for all orchards."

Last Saturday, Joanna Read and Leanne Gammin, both



Summoning up ancient forces, Leanne Gammin, left, reaches into the branches while Joanna Read, right, pours cider over the apple tree's roots

aged nine, were borne shoulder-high into the lichen-covered trees. Using long-handled forks, they thrust slices of cider-soaked toast among the branches.

Around the base of the trees, the girls took turns pouring jugs of cider to give fresh life to its roots. The wassail

song was then again bellowed to the skies: "For to bloom well and to bear well, so merry let us be."

The guns blazed. The "old apple tree" had been toasted, woken and serenaded as though it were a real person. It is, in a way, "You lose one tree and you risk losing an entire

variety of apple," says Ms Turrell. On Stoke Gabriel's wassail night, Joanna and Leanne reclaimed and reaffirmed something for others of their generation.

Common Ground, Seven Dials Warehouse, 44 Earlham Street, London WC2H 9LA (0171 379 3109).

Clear away the cobwebs from last year's nest

AFTER Christmas, one thing changes whatever the weather: the days start to get longer. That is important to birds now. The lengthening hours of daylight trigger changes inside them, and towards the end of January many start to prepare for

spring. The males look for territories with suitable nesting places, and when they have found one they begin to defend it against other males. Above all, they start to sing. Their song proclaims to other males, "This is my property for the coming season", and

invites females: "Would you like to come and join me?"

In Holland in the last century, male chaffinches were sometimes kept in darkness throughout the summer, and then given a little more light each day. Their bodies reacted as they would to lengthening daylight — and they began to sing in October. By then, large flocks of migrating chaffinches were coming into Holland from northern Europe and the singing males were used to attract the females and trap them for use as food. It was a practical experiment that clearly showed the impact of increasing light on the males.

Near London I expect to hear my first chaffinch sing some time next week. Of course, the weather does also influence birds, and if it is cold and grey I may have to wait another week or so. But male chaffinches are getting busy. The older ones will try to occupy the territory they had last year, while birds raised last summer will try to squeeze themselves in somewhere.

They are all starting to examine apple trees for suitable forks for a nest, and to fly conspicuously round what they hope will be their boundaries. They call with a loud "chink, chink" and finally start singing. After that, their song — a string of rattling notes that grows faster and louder, and ends in a cheerful

FEATHER REPORT

flourish — will ring out from the end of a branch until midsummer.

Blackbirds are engaged in much the same thing. The older birds often join up with the mate they had the previous year. Both male and female will have stayed around the territory during the winter, if it provided enough food, though they will probably have roosted in separate bushes. Now the male starts roosting next to his old partner and they start defending the territory together again.

The blackbirds that will start singing in early February will mostly be young ones

trying to establish themselves. The shiny black young males have already

started courting on the lawn — approaching a brown female with their head feathers lifted, their rump feathers raised in a hump, their tail spread and a wild look in their eye.

Blue tits are going in and out of holes in trees, often throwing out old debris. In this species the male may try to win a female by flying with a strange butterfly-like motion up to a nest-hole that he hopes will tempt her.

The male blue tits are already singing early in the morning, but their brief song, like a pack of cards being flicked, is not particularly noticeable. The great tits are

much more in evidence with their loud "teacher, teacher" song and its tri-syllabic variants.

The tits are in a halfway house at present. Though they sing in their territories in the morning, they go back and join up in foraging flocks later in the day. They are late nesters, and spring is still a long way off for them.

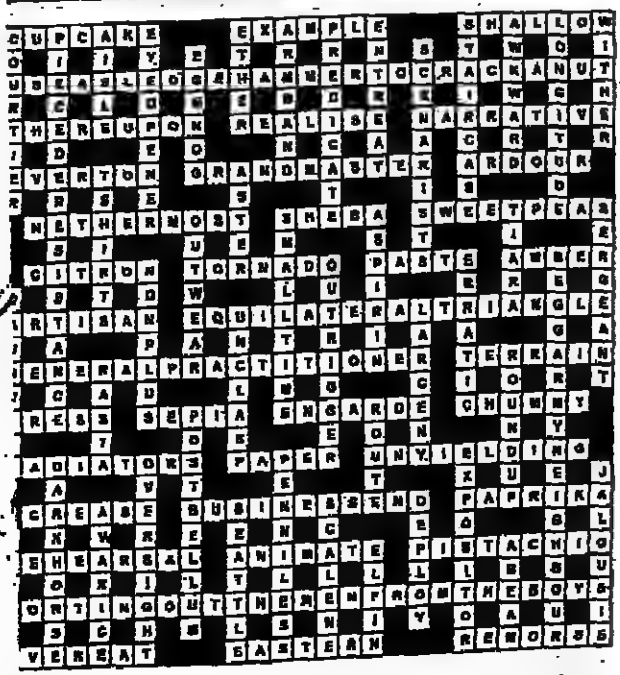
DERWENT MAY

What's about Birders — Listen out for mistle thrushes starting to sing. Twite — lesser white-fronted geese at Holham, Norfolk. American widgeon at Heysham, Lancashire; ferruginous duck at Frodsham, Cheshire.

Details from Birdline, 0891 70222. Calls cost 40p a minute, cheap rate, 50p at all other times. PETER BROWN



Male chaffinches will soon be house-hunting and singing an invitation to mates



e winner of the New Year Jumbo Crossword, who receives a fisherella of Moët & Chandon champagne and £100, is Fisherella of Moët & Chandon, Herefordshire. The five runners-up, who receive £100, are: P. Barrett of London N6; A. Carr of Chichester; East Sussex; N. Mepham of Harpenden, Hertfordshire; E. Procter of Eastcote, Middlesex; P. Raikes of Oxford.

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Travel continues on page 24



Chill out in the deep freeze
Alaska - 22

THE TIMES travel

Secrets of a long distance walker
Britain - 23



The Genoese quarter of the town looks above the harbour in Bonifacio with its row of welcoming restaurants — but a short drive inland you find the home of vengeance and vendetta with a brooding air of thinly suppressed menace

Stolen moments in bandit country

Starting our spotlight on France,
Sally Baker keeps her guard up
on the beautiful island of Corsica

On hearing that I was off to Corsica, a friend urged me first to read the definitive book by Dorothy Carrington, whose title escaped her. She meant *Ms Carrington's Granite Island*, but I mistook only bought *The Dream-Hunters of Corsica*, and so arrived on the island reading from the book's extraordinary tales of the mazzetti, the village women who traditionally had

mystic powers to foretell or invoke death through dreams of hunting down their victims in the maquis, the island's heady, herb-laden vegetation. This was pretty spooky stuff, and I am not easily spooked. Yet I found Corsica to be a truly strange island, with a brooding air of thinly suppressed violence and menace. This is the home of vengeance and vendetta, of banditry and resistance, whose favourite tourist souvenirs on proud

display in every shop are a vast range of fierce-looking combat knives, from cute little flick-knives to 18-inch serrated jobs, many of them with *Vendetta* lovingly inscribed along the blade. (A sinister extension of this craft seen in one shop was a range of tawdry goods bearing a hooded figure holding an AK47 above the legend *Liberté pour les patriotes*. Shame on anyone who buys one.) The high inland town of Sartène is proud to be the home of the island's last official bandit, who emerged from hiding in the maquis in 1955 to do his penance. Strolling one lunchtime through its dark, silent streets overshadowed by tall, secretive, shuttered granite houses, every time I turned my head it was to glimpse a furtive shadow slipping into an alley entrance, or a door being closed by an unseen hand. Several of the houses had massive wooden doors with the island's bizarre symbol, the *Tête de Maure* (Maure's head), carved into them. I was not inclined to linger.

It was a relief to find that Ajaccio, the island's capital on the west coast, is a pleasant, sunny, bustling port of shady squares and harbour-front cafés. The Saturday market is an intoxicating mix of herby, spicy smells, fruit and veg, local honeys, liqueurs made from myrtle and aperitifs made from red wine and herbs (try Cap Corse, one of the best). Corsican music, both old and new, is enormously popular and beautiful: it is played in bars and cafés and tapes sold on market stalls everywhere. On the wall of the railway station in Ajaccio is a helpful notice in English extolling the delights of the train trip inland to Corte. It reads: "It is a must. The train winds around the mountain, crosses audacious bridges, grapples on the rock far from the road and the villages at the foot of the snow covered Monte d'Oro, and goes through the magnificent forest of Vizzavona planted with *harcio* pines and beeches."

Who could resist? So for two hours and 35 minutes we did



local paper had on its front page a picture of five mug hunters with a dozen or so many looking boar carcasses at their feet. I was about to deplore this barbaric practice until I told that, last season, half a dozen of the beasts had to be chased away from our swimming pool.

But I cannot tell you what boar tastes like: we all had steak and chips. Delicious. And while we ate and pondered the matter of not missing the last train back, we were serenaded by a guitar and a superb voice, singing in Corsican, which is no mere dialect but a language in its own right that is closer to Italian than French.

When planning excursions, by all means add up the distances shown on the Michelin — then double them before converting into time allowed. Then add a bit more anyway for the livestock haz-

ard: cows, goats, and the ever-present wild pigs. A delightful and not too demanding drive from the Ajaccio area is inland to Bastelica, 33km (about 21 miles) on the map, but see above. This gives plenty of hairpin practice, with the reward of Corsican cooking for lunch on the terrace of the pretty Hotel du Castagnetti.

Having got our mountain legs, or wheels, we struck north as far as the Gulf of Porto to see the bizarre red rock formations of Les Calanche.

This unique landscape is absolutely unmissable and for surely one of the most beautiful views in Europe. In the village of Piana just south of the bay, turn west on a rough lane to the Saliceto Belvedere, and wind your way up the cliffs for a few kilometres until you come to the communications masts and the cross which mark the summit. Grab your camera, get out of the car, and hold on to your hat — it blows up there.

At the southern tip of Corsica, with Sardinia clearly visible across the water, lies another astonishing sight — the town of Bonifacio. The landscape as you drive south flattens out and becomes dry, rugged and wild. Even the maquis cannot get a root-hold on this rock.

Bonifacio's old buildings rise above the desert like a mirage, perched on a spur of blindingly white cliffs which have been so severely eroded beneath the town that the houses on the edges are effectively balancing on thin air. The narrow streets and tall houses of the old high town lead you out to a sailors' cemetery and fortress on the spur's very tip.

Descend back through the town and steeply down to the harbour to take your pick of the long row of restaurants along the water's edge, from which vantage point you can watch the sleek yachts disgorge their cargoes of equally sleek people.

● The author was a guest of Voyages Ilena.

CORSICA FACT FILE

- Voyages Ilena, 1 Old Garden House, The Lanterns, Bridge Lane, London SW11 3AD (0171-924 4440, fax 0171-924 4441), offers a range of villas and hotels in Corsica. Prices for two weeks in a villa with pool, including flights, car hire and insurance, start from £607 per person.
- Corsican Places (01424 774366) also offers holidays on the island.
- Watersports are available almost everywhere: windsurfing, sailing, scuba diving, parasailing.
- Restaurants range from pizzerias and crêperies to temples to high gastronomy. For self-caterers, the supermarkets have fine baguettes, cheeses, pâtés, salad and fruit.
- At Bonifacio, try Pizzeria Grille des Amis, with main courses at about £15-40 (about £8); in Ajaccio try Restaurant Le Scampé, with main courses at £17.5.
- Reading: The Travel Bookshop (0171-229 5266) recommends *The Journal of a Tour to Corsica*, by James Boswell (in print, £9.95, ISBN 1 870948 82 3), *Granite Island*, by Dorothy Carrington (Penguin, £8.99, ISBN 0 14 009524 1), *Corsica*, by Theo Taylor (Rough Guides, £8.99, ISBN 1 85283 089 3).

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France: Savouring the birthplace of *Cakes and Ale*, Peter Stothard finds even the zoo animals dine in style ...

Reverie on Maugham's Cap Ferrat



Somerset Maugham at his retreat, Villa Mauresque

You can tell a lot about a place by looking at its zoo. On Cap Ferrat the crocodiles shine like living handbags; the tigers parade their thick Siberian coats on the warmest autumn day; the Vietnamese porcupine-like pig (not stylish creatures even by standards less exacting than those of the Côte d'Azur) display their dull, black skins against a designer-grey background of cinders.

On Cap Ferrat, the sometimes playful of Belgian kings, French mistresses and boyfriends of Somerset Maugham, the leopards saunter like starlets, and even the warhogs are fed on grissini. One moment you can be nipping at a breadstick in a hotel bar, staring across to Nice or Monte Carlo, and the next feeding the same delicate food-stuff, neatly packaged in cellophane or five francs a portion, past the backward-pointing tusks of African wild pigs.

This is not a place whose authorities worry too much where the next dollar is coming from. Dollars have been flowing here since its discovery by fashionable society in

the Belle Epoque at the beginning of the century — and they are still flowing into fine hotels, fabled restaurants, formidably priced properties and even into this friendliest of zoos. Just watch a ferret fox tuck into a slab of fresh steak; see the pleasure in his huge eyes and ears and wonder how many even of the French human population are eating so well.

Somerset Maugham's guests in the 1930s had little to worry about on that score. The worst that could happen was that their host would serve them his notoriously tasteless avocado ice-cream. His magnificent house, the Villa Mauresque, with exotic fruit trees and terraces of roses, stands at the furthest point of the Cap as a reminder of the days when a small section of literary England, escaping from cold, rain and homosexuality laws, gathered for good food and lavish entertainment on their Riviera.

The villa no longer contains its unique window painted by Gauguin or its bathmat by Matisse. But its Moorish talisman against the evil eye, the symbol repeated on the collect-



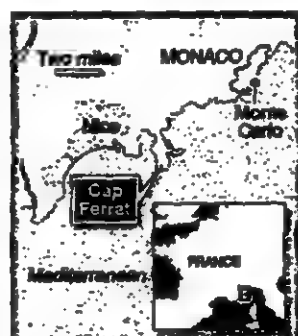
Villa owners on Cap Ferrat have always had to keep up with such notorious big spenders as Beatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild, whose pink palace is full of Fragonard and Sévres

ed edition of his owner's vast and lucrative oeuvre, still stares at unwelcome visitors from the entrance.

Maugham liked to write about the people and places around his French retreat. Two of the best examples are *The Facts of Life*, a short story set against the casino of Monte Carlo, and *The Three Fat*

Women of Antibes, a bravura portrayal of bitchery, bridge and slimming. But the author also came to Cap Ferrat, like many other tourists since, to relax and think about the life he had left behind. It was here that he wrote *Cakes and Ale*, creating his finest heroine around the character of the first Mrs Thomas Hardy, and cooking a faraway snook at the literary London of the 1920s whose idiosyncrasies both amused him and had made him rich.

Money meant a great deal to Maugham. Villa owners on Cap Ferrat have always had to keep up with such notorious big spenders as Beatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild, whose pink palace, full of Fragonard and Sévres, remains there for tourists like a small Wallace Collection in the sun. Maugham had to fund his extravagances from his own pockets; at his own more modest palace he used to harass his publishers with as



much vigour as that for which his modern successors are so often mocked.

In *Cakes and Ale* there is a special word of admiration for the literary lioniser Mrs Sidney Colvin, who helps a favourite poet out of obscurity. "She dealt with the publishers and made contracts for him that would have staggered even a Cabinet minister: she even went so far as to separate him from his wife, with whom he had lived happily for ten years, since she felt that a poet, to be true to himself and his art, must not be encumbered with domestic ties." Maugham's marriage, to the daughter of the original Dr Barnardo, was little part of his life on the Riviera.

The great old man of letters is more prominently remembered now not at his home (which has given its name to the local bus stop) but a few hundred yards away towards the sea at the piano-bar of the Grand-Hotel du Cap Ferrat. Even in an off-season weekend in October, when the sun

cannot be guaranteed to reflect on the Cap from the white cliffsides, this hotel is one of those rare places which works like the smoothest engine.

With a glass funicular stretching down its gardens to an overflowing salt-water pool, its precise, staff and immaculate pale cream and avocado decoration, it is a more than fitting memorial.

One tiny repeated theme in Maugham's novels and stories is the ever-increasing demands placed by guests on hotels. Today's Grand Hotel would have no difficulty with the most demanding visitor from the past.

The same cannot be said for its similarly priced inland companion, the Château de la Chèvre d'Or, in the popular cliffside village of Èze. Out of season here meant out of service, and a long wait even to restore heat to a chilly room.

Although the views of where we had been on Cap Ferrat were spectacular, we were left envying the thick coats of the grissini-eating tigers.

CAP FERRAT FACT FILE

■ Rooms at the Grand-Hotel du Cap Ferrat (00 334 93 76 50) start from Fr750 (about £94) a night; the Suite Royale costs from Fr4,300 a night. A dinner menu for two would cost about Fr420 (drinks not included).

■ The Château de la Chèvre d'Or (00 334 92 10 66 66), in the village of Èze, charges Fr1,000 a night for a single room in low season; Fr2,400 a night for a junior suite (prices of main suites on application).

■ French Expressions, 13 McCosmo Mews, Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BG (0171-631 1312, fax 441 422) can arrange tailor-made holidays throughout France, including three-night breaks at the Grand-Hotel from £450 per person, and at the Chèvre d'Or from £316, with bed and breakfast, scheduled flights to Nice and self-drive car hire. The Chèvre d'Or is also featured by *Unlondon Holidays* — the Best of France (01852 894400, fax 831133).

■ Le Zoo de Cap Ferrat (00 334 93 76 04 06), Villa et Jardins Ephrussi de Rothschild (00 334 93 01 33 09), open daily 2-6pm, weekends and holidays 10am-6pm.

■ The French Tourist Board, 0891 244123 (calls are charged at 39p a minute cheap rate, 49p at all other times; Nice Tourist Office, 00 334 93 87 07 07).

■ Reading: *Tender is the Night*, by F Scott Fitzgerald (Penguin, £5.99, ISBN 0 140 18075 3). *Collected Short Stories*, Vol 1, by W Somerset Maugham (Mandarin, £7.99, ISBN 0 749 30345 3). *France: Côte d'Azur*, by Dana Peacocks and Michael Pauls (Corgi, £12.99, ISBN 1 850 11061 4).

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Tue 25 Feb	Larnaca, Cyprus	Nicosia
Wed 26 Feb	Asdod, Israel	Jerusalem & Bethlehem
Thu 27 Feb	Port Said, Egypt	Cairo & Pyramids
Fri 28 Feb	Transit Suez Canal	
Sat 1 Mar	Safage, Egypt	Luxor, Karnak & Valley of The Kings
Sun 2 Mar	Asheh, Jordan	Petra
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Tue 4 Mar		

The above gives just a brief outline. In most ports of call there is a choice of excursions available. This itinerary will also operate from 7 - 18 November 1997

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... while a desire to relive his childhood led James MacManus to the coast of Brittany for an outdoor holiday



Camping with no strings

Memories of childhood holidays draw many parents back to old haunts with their own children.

In pursuit of holidays past we have revisited the stung beaches of Aldborough and Thorpe in Suffolk, the now greying sands of West Wittering in Sussex and the surly strand at Trebarwith on the north Cornish coast.

All this bucket-and-spade delighted our children and reformulated my memories of crabbing in Cornish rockpools and competing in the August regatta on Thorpe's river.

But the charm of such nostalgia holidays, and the climate that goes with them, has always eluded my South African-born wife.

So last year we took the decision to go camping somewhere warm on the rocky basis that she had once had a jolly good time sleeping in a tent and cooking over an open fire in the Transvaal.

After brisk negotiation, Transvaal went out of the window, followed by the tents. We settled instead for a mobile home on a camp-site in Brittany.

With much foreboding, on my part and some comment about my pathetic lack of adventure on hers we drove off the ferry at St Malo on a July morning to find ourselves three hours later at Fousnant Atlantique, a camp-site on the

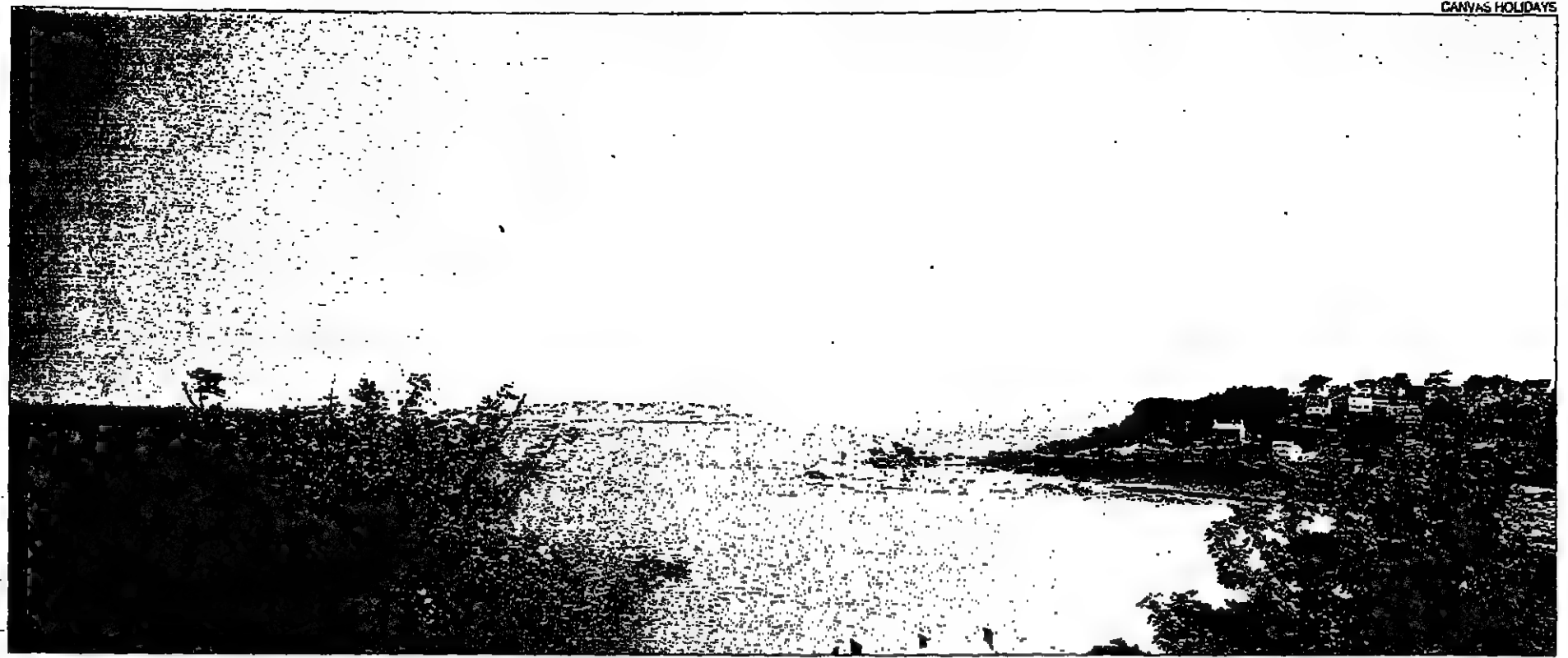
FACT FILE

■ Canvas Holidays (0645 747222) offers starting prices of £573 for a family of two adults and four children staying at one of 74 sites in Europe in a standard mobile for 14 nights including ferry. ■ Other companies offering camping holidays in Britain and Europe are Eurocamp (0541 550555), Eurosites (01706 830739) and Caravan Holidays (01923 284549). ■ Reading: *French Entree - Brittany*, by Patricia Penn (Quiller, £6.95, ISBN 1 899 16303 4). *Caravanning in France 1997* (Michelin, £3.49, ISBN 2 060 06179 2).

south Brittany coast just a few miles from the medieval walled city of Concarneau.

We had chosen the site from scores listed by Canvas Holidays with three objectives. With three children squashed in the back of an old Saab we did not want a long drive from the ferry. We also wanted a camp that was walking distance from a good beach and which offered supervised activities for children and we wanted to be within easy reach of some good restaurants.

Score two out of three for Fousnant. We never did get to test the system whereby a child courier, in our case a bronzed Scottish lass,



The beaches of Brittany in northwest France are uncrowded and clean with abundant rock pools hiding lush sea life. Small harbour towns provide excellent restaurants



Amanda MacManus and daughter Elizabeth relax by the mobile home in Fousnant

swooped down on children aged four to 13 and took them off for organised activities for up to four hours at a time, six days a week.

Our two youngest came down with chickenpox on day one so we were forced to turn our backs on what looked like a guilt-free method of getting rid of the little darlings for hours at a time.

Our spotty brood meant that we were unable to mingle with our largely Dutch, German and Scottish fellow campers around the pool, so instead we set forth from our mobile home at ten every morning and headed for the beaches.

Every other parent, we noticed, packed their children off with the couriers and then sat down to an extended al fresco breakfast.

Ten minutes walk through a pine wood led to miles of clean sand that stretched either way to little fishing harbours at Beg Mel and Mousierlin. The water was cold, but the sun was hot and every now and then young men on balloon wheeled bicycles pedalled past selling ice-cream.

Ten minutes further afield in a car took us to serious beach life with seaweed smothered rock-pools hiding giant crabs, and a decent two-star family run hotel, La Pointe de Mousierlin, to fall

into for lunch. Children's menus were about £6 per head for fish or chicken and chips almost everywhere we went. Fixed menus started from £12 per head. Compared to the South of France the prices are cheap and the Bretons welcoming.

And so we lazed on the beach every morning and lunched on unseasonal quantities of mussels, langoustines and baked clams, followed by endless variations of pancakes that seem to be the mainstay of the Breton diet. The glorified caravan which was home for two weeks welcomed us back

after a stab at sightseeing in the afternoon. Although just 28ft by 10ft it took the sting, or the magic if you prefer, out of camping.

With five berths in two bedrooms, a small sitting room/diner and a gas cooker, fridge, mains electricity and lavatories and showers that worked, it provided a comfortable base for the five of us.

The weather allowed us to barbecue out most evenings and there were babysitters whenever we decided, usually disastrously, to try a Michelin recommended restaurant in the area.

The camp was run with Teutonic efficiency which seemed at odds with the wild and windswept character of the Celtic rim of France — but it worked. Fresh bread and milk appeared in the camp shop every morning and the launderette and shower blocks hummed with activity from an early hour.

Everyone obeyed the rules — no ball games within the camp, no noise after 11pm, a speed limit of 10mph in the camp and no cars allowed back through the main gate after 11pm (late returners have to park outside the gates and walk in).

It was slightly like being back at school but, in their rows of tents which paraded

down hedge-lined avenues, the campers seemed to relish the discipline.

We in our superior mobile homes, shaded by trees and discreetly positioned for some privacy, secretly yearned for a slice of the real camping life, even if only to sit round a fire at night swapping yarns about taut canvas, tight guy ropes and sharp tent pegs with fellow devotees of the great outdoors.

But there were no campfires to sit around. Everyone piled into the camp bar at night, drank prodigious quantities of the local cider, and staggered back to their tents amid much giggling.

As far as we were concerned they need not have bothered. Long before lights out we were sleeping the sleep of those who know that their children will be up with, or usually well before, the dawn. And for their sake we will probably go camping again because for them a French camp-site beats a British beach every time.

James MacManus travelled as a guest of Canvas Holidays.

WORD WATCH

Answers from page 27
LETHIFEROUS
(b) That causes or results in death, deadly. From the Latin *lethum* death + *ferous* bringing.
MONITION
(b) Instruction or direction. Warning, admonitory counsel.
LASCARINE
(a) An old East Indian soldier under the British Raj; also one of the native police. An adaptation of the Portuguese *lascar*, Urdu *lashkari* military.
LUBISH
(a) A Lubish mark or shilling was a denomination belonging to a money of account formerly in extensive mercantile use in North Germany. A toponym from Luback, a town of northern Germany.

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Our three departures will take place in April affording us the opportunity to enjoy the colourful spectacle of the bulbfields as their blooms carpet the countryside in every imaginable hue.

We will explore some of Amsterdam's cultural delights including the works of the great masters, Rembrandt and Vermeer in the fabulous Rijksmuseum, a diamond cutting workshop, and a canal cruise through the heart of the city. In the picture-perfect countryside we will visit the charming villages of Edam and Marken, join a walking tour of Hoorn, visit the amazing 70 acre gardens of Keukenhof and the World War II battlefield and Airborne Museum at Arnhem.



All this is achieved from the comfort of Rembrandt van Rijn, which will be our base for the seven nights, thus avoiding tedious road journeys and a succession of hotels. This Dutch owned and operated vessel offers spacious and comfortable outside cabins with large picture windows. The main lounge and bar are well furnished and welcoming and the one-stop dining room provides delicious Continental cuisine. The sun deck has comfortable lounge chairs and is an ideal place for observation. Our three voyages are for English speaking passengers only.



THE ITINERARY

DAY 1 London (Heathrow) - Amsterdam with KLM. Drive to the Rembrandt van Rijn which is moored in a central location and embark. Afternoon at leisure. Welcome dinner.

DAY 2 Amsterdam. Morning visit to the Rijksmuseum and a diamond cutting factory. Afternoon at leisure.

DAY 3 Amsterdam. Morning canal cruise by motorlaunch. Afternoon free.

DAY 4 Zaanse Schied. Sail from Amsterdam in the early hours making our way across the Zaanse Schied. From here we will visit Edam and Marken famous for their cheese. Narrow canal, wooden bridges, the historic Weigh House and the museum with a floating cellar make for a most enjoyable morning's visit. During lunch sail to Hoorn where we will join an organised walk through this enchanting town. In the late afternoon sail to Kampen, arriving in time for an after dinner stroll along its historic lanes.

DAY 5 Arnhem. Morning sailing through the forested countryside to Arnhem. After lunch we will visit the World War II battle site and the Airborne Museum which houses models of the battlefield and provides a commentary. Later explore Arnhem, the market place and 15th century Grote Kerk.

DAY 6 Dordrecht and Rotterdam. Sail across Holland past gently rolling countryside which is dotted with windmills. Arrive in Dordrecht after lunch and explore this historic town before sailing on to Rotterdam for an overnight mooring.

DAY 7 Keukenhof Gardens and Delft. Leave the vessel after breakfast for a full day visit to the marvellous bulb gardens of Keukenhof at Lisse

and continue to Helt for a pottery factory visit and some free time in this lovely town. Drive on to Amsterdam to enjoy the vessel in the late afternoon. Evening free in Amsterdam.

DAY 8 Amsterdam - London (Heathrow). Breakfast after break fast and drive to Schiphol airport for your return flight with KLM.

DEPARTURE DATES

12, 19, 26 April 1997

PRICES PER PERSON

Main deck aft	2 beds	£1075
Main deck forward	2 beds	£1129
Promenade deck	2 beds	£1225
Promenade deck, Single		£1725

Prices subject to change. Prices subject to change. Price includes: 8 berths air travel London - Amsterdam return, 7 nights aboard the Rembrandt van Rijn on full board, excursions as detailed, entrance fees, port taxes, transfers, UK departure tax. Not included: Travel insurance, airport taxes, tips to crew.

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France: Nagged by his horse-loving 12-year-old daughter, Paul Heiney rides again – after a gap of 15 years...

Saddle sore but happy on the trails of the Tarn

Of the many mysteries which growing daughters present to their fathers, there is none more perplexing than the relationship between a 12-year-old and horses. I reassure myself that there are more dangerous liaisons in which a pre-teenage girl could be indulging. But tolerance was not enough. A "riding holiday" was demanded.

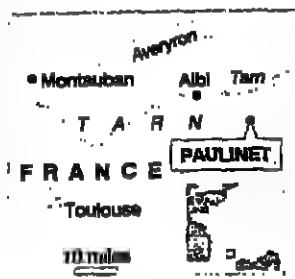
I have heard bad reports of these holidays: all bunk beds and baked beans and nothing to read but a tattered *Horse and Hound* or *Bunty*. Anyway, I do not like riding.

But fathers have duties and so daughter Rose and I lugged our helmets, breeches, boots and saddle-sore ointment to the rolling hills of the Tarn, an hour by train from Toulouse.

Half close your eyes in the Tarn and you could be in Derbyshire. Ravines and gorges are scoured by fast-flowing rivers; the steep hillsides are thick with pine and broad-leaved trees, and the tops of the hills are flat farmland.

Les Julianes at Paulinet, our destination, lies 1,200ft above sea level, with a view all the way to the Pyrenees. I was not looking that far. My eyes

Rose Heiney writes:
Well I never thought I'd see the day when Dad would climb upon a horse, kick it into a canter, and jump while I stood watching, hands over eyes. Anyway, we both had some incredible rides. I actually found the rides more daunting than my father, not having much of a head for heights. Astonishing really, what you'll do under the instruction of someone who doesn't speak your language.



were on the fit and polished horses, the large stable and indoor school, set well away from the farmhouse, and on the house itself. No bunkhouse here: it is an adorable 17th-century farmhouse with walls 2ft thick to deflect summer heat.

There are only six bedrooms and, I am happy to report, no evidence of any sweaty horseblanker ever having crossed the threshold. It is the French farmhouse of your dreams, and within an hour of arriving it was hard to believe we were not personal and lifelong friends of our hosts, Marc and Claudine.

I spotted vast jugs of red wine on the farmhouse table, and thought I might decline the riding. You do not have to ride here: you can eat, drink and swim in the pool.

Daughter had other ideas. On the first day, I found myself booked in for a morning lesson and a two-hour ride in the afternoon. I presented myself at the stables in a pair of breeches cut for a finer figure than mine and was introduced to my horse: an upstanding chestnut gelding

see it. But give the horses plenty of rein and they find footholds. Then you relax when you meet the lush meadows on the valley floors, let your horse drink at the fast-flowing streams, soak up the fragrance of the forests and the hot animal beneath you.

It hurt on the first day, but by day three I had a rump like the Lone Ranger's. I needed it. Ninety minutes into that first cross-country ride Guy shouted, "OK. Galloooooop." Not having the French to say politely, "No thank you, rising trot will be fine," I had no choice. "Get into your jumping position," he said, demonstrating a pose like a jockey at Becher's Brook.

By now, the word "galloooooop" had sunk into the brains of the horses and antique Pataras was gathering speed. There was no ejector seat, no parachute. So I galloped. Backside out of the saddle, standing in the stirrups, reins shortened, head low.

The pace quickened, the forest air whistling past all we emerged at the top of the hill and slowed to a walk. Fantastic! The whole ride punched the air and cried out with joy.

After three hours in the saddle, I staggered back to the farmhouse and discovered to my delight that to get to our room you walk past the kitchen window. Peering through the shutters I could see Marc roasting his mustards, oils, vinaigrettes, and wine. This was better than embrocation.

We fed late and superbly every night on the robust

cuisine of the Tarn (goose pâté unbelievable, stuffed duck's neck beyond description), and swilled red wine like horses at a trough. Claudine, smiling like the Mona Lisa, joined us with the chocolate pudding.

After that, the days got better. To my astonishment as much as Rose's, under the firm direction of Guy I did a little jumping, and liked it. There were three "galloooooops" every day, each more thrilling than the preceding one.

One lady took a tumble (a rare occurrence here), where, on the youthful Guy swung down from his horse, broke a twig from the hedge for a splint, and ripped his shirt from his taut body to improvise a sling. Then, bare chested, he flung himself into the saddle and galloped at full speed for help. Beat that for romance.

Even now I miss my daily gallop through the forests, pausing to pick blackberries then trotting through the small farmyards where chickens roost in old 2CVs.

I shall go on a horse-riding holiday again. I might even let the daughter come, too.

Paul and Rose Heiney were guests of Intravel.

FACT FILE

Intravel, Hovingham, York YO6 4JZ (01653 628652). Les Julianes opens from March to late October and is suitable for riders of all ages and abilities. Prices start from £48 for seven nights with self-drive (or from £395 by air to Toulouse, train and transfer) and includes half board, ten hours' instruction or five half-day rides.

VFB France Active (01242 240310) includes horse riding as part of its multi-activity holidays in the French Alps.

Reading: Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes, by R.L. Stevenson (OUP, £4.99, ISBN 0 192 82629 8). **Michelin Gorges du Tarn** (in French only) (£8.99, ISBN 2 060 35703 8).



The Tarn region in southern France, with its picturesque scenery, is ideal for riding

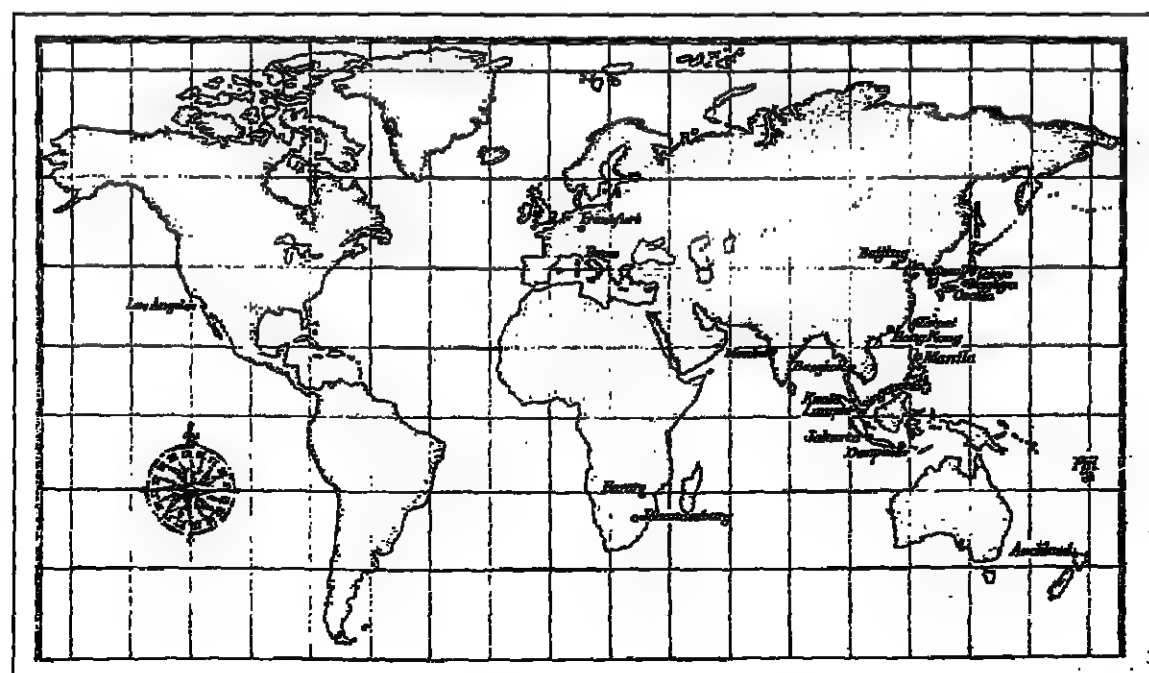
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For many the visit to Kizhi Island in Lake Onega will be the highlight of the waterway journey. Here the magnificent Church of the Transfiguration with its 22 shimmering grey domes in three tiers are more than a match for the fairytale splendour of Moscow's St Basil's. From here we cruise through the fascinating waterway system through Goritsy to the cities of the Golden Ring, stopping at Yaroslavl and Uglich on the mighty Volga. These magical cities of Holy Russia still preserve their medieval kremlins, fortified monasteries and churches, in surroundings remote from the modern world.

For this journey we are operating with the MS Karamzin which was used for the first time last year and received high praise from a large number of passengers. The tour represents extremely good value for money and will therefore appeal to those wishing to see unspoilt parts of Russia from an economical and comfortable base.

The MS Karamzin

This comfortable, well-maintained ship was built in Germany and recently partially renovated. All cabins are outside with large picture window (except those on the Lower Deck that have two portholes), private shower, toilet and temperature control; the ship is fully air-conditioned. The bright, pleasant restaurant has windows on three sides offering views as you dine. Cuisine (Russian and Continental) is adjusted to western taste. There is a main lounge/bar with live music, several more lounges, beauty shop and ample deck space. Laundry service is available and a medical doctor is on board.

Because the ship is now under Western management, you can expect many upgraded amenities including quality towels, soap, toilet paper, coffee and better food, service, cruise director and staff.



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Itinerary
Day 1 Fly from London Gatwick to St Petersburg. Drive to the MS Karamzin.
Day 2 In the morning a sightseeing tour of the city will include Peter and Paul Fortress.
Day 3 Morning visit to the Hermitage Museum. Afternoon visit to Pushkin, the blue and gold rococo palace designed for the Empress Elizabeth. Sail in the evening.
Day 4 Svir Sroy - the day is spent leisurely cruising Lake Ladoga and the Svir River stopping at the village of Svir Sroy.
Day 5 Kizhi Island - sail across Lake Onega to Kizhi and see the typical wooden churches, houses with early barns and windmill. A visit will be made to the Transfiguration Church.
Day 6 Goritsy - sail along the Baltic Canal and across White Lake to the town of Goritsy

to visit Kirill Beloserskiy Monastery.

Day 7 Yaroslavl - one of the seven cities of the 'Golden Ring'. A city sightseeing tour includes some of the churches and fine examples of 16th-century architecture.

Day 8 Uglich - cruise along the Volga to Uglich. Founded in the 12th century, it was here that Ivan the Terrible's youngest son was murdered. Sail in the evening towards Moscow crossing the Moscow/Volga Canal.

Day 9 Sail along the River Moskva reaching Moscow in the late morning. A city tour is arranged for the afternoon.

Day 10 Morning city tour of Moscow to see Red Square, St Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin including a visit to the Armoury Museum.

Day 11 Return flight from Moscow to London Heathrow.

Departure Dates & Prices

May 14*	£245.00
June 22	£295.00
July 2*	£245.00
August 9*	£245.00
August 20*	£245.00
September 28	£295.00

* Includes return airfare to London from Moscow (including the total duration 11 nights).

Supplements per person

Single cabin	£380.00
Main Deck	£95.00
Upper Deck	£150.00
Boat Deck	£220.00

Prices include: return airfare (first class), full board, excursions and entrance fees, all transportation, services of cruise director, hotel/restaurant, travel insurance, overnight airport transfer, visa processing, tips.

All policies are subject to change. All bookings are subject to our Conditions of Booking, a copy of which is available on request.

Please note that on some dates, departures will operate from Heathrow and return to Gatwick. Please enquire at the time of booking.

Longer Duration

A 14-night itinerary is also available from £975 per person on the following dates: May 25, June 6*, July 13, 27*, August 31 and September 14*. Please contact us for details.

* These departures operate in the reverse direction (Gatwick to St Petersburg).

* This itinerary is only available in St Petersburg. Departure from the above prices.

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... and Brian Jackman walks the smugglers' tracks of the Cerdagne, a lost valley deep in the Pyrenees

Turn right at Dead Man's Fountain

At the way from Perpignan the peaches hung red and ripe in the roadside orchards. Higher, beyond the medieval walls of Villefranche de Conflent in the foothills of the Pyrenees, the Spanish chestnuts were in flower. Despite a late snowfall at the end of May, summer had come with scorching temperatures.

From Villefranche the road ran on towards Spain, following the narrow-gauge tracks of Le Petit Train Jaune, France's highest railway line, into the heart of the Cerdagne, a lost valley hidden deep in the Catalan Pyrenees.

The Cerdagne is classic frontier country, a mixture of colliding cultures with a curious, dislocated history. Long ago the medieval Kings of Mallorca ruled here. Until the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 this region still belonged to Catalonia; but then the power of Spain receded, leaving the Cerdagne washed up permanently on the French side of the border. Yet even today Llívia, once the capital of the Cerdagne, remains as a Spanish enclave marooned inside France, where people say "Hola" instead of "Bonjour", and the villages of the Cerdagne with their curious, truncated names — Hix, Ur, Err and Llo — are still strongly Catalan in character.

I was heading for Valcaballera (population 35), tucked away in a remote valley near the town of Saillagouse, within walking distance of the Spanish frontier. It is the kind of village where you wake in the mornings to the sound of cows being driven through the streets; a huddle of stone houses, all roofed in authentic Pyrenean fashion with fish-tail slates, set beside a rushing torrent.

At its centre is the Auberge Les Ecuries, a welcoming mountain inn whose patron, Etienne Lafitte, first came to Valcaballera at the age of 11 to holiday at his uncle's house. He fell in love with the region — something which is not



Today *les contrebandiers* are gone from the rugged Pyrenees and walkers now follow their old, clandestine trails, returning to a hot bath or sauna and a four-course dinner

hard to do — and came back to transform the village inn into a delightful retreat for mountain walkers.

"My uncle was a famous smuggler," he said. "He was always taking cigarettes, nylon and other little luxuries into Spain. During the Second

World War he also helped to guide escaped British POWs across the Pyrenees into Spain. He just asked if they would help carry some extra contraband for him."

Today, *les contrebandiers* are gone and walkers follow their old clandestine trails, returning at the end of an arduous hike to enjoy a hot bath or sauna, followed by a splendid four-course dinner cooked by *le patron* himself.

Fortified by a breakfast of fresh apricot juice, hot croissants and coffee, I set off up the steep path into the mountains behind the auberge. The summer meadows were bright with wild flowers: orchids, trifolium, scented pinks, sky-blue campanulas and yellow gentians with leaves like asses' ears. But what most caught the eye were the butterflies, rising and falling among the grass blades.

Some were familiar: orange tips, painted ladies, clouded yellows. Others — continental varieties of blues, coppers and fritillaries — I knew only from illustrations in field guides. Black-veined whites, a species not seen in Britain since the 19th century, were common here, flying in the company of another butterfly I had never seen before — the Parnassius apollo — its large, papery-white wings exquisitely marked with black, grey and faded blood-red spots.

Higher up the track, where the pines and alpine roses ended, open hillsides of close-cropped grass rose steeply

towards the skyline. It was too late in the year to see the pasqueflowers in bloom. Their leathery grey husks were everywhere, nodding in the breeze. But the sun-baked slopes were still covered with pincushion clumps of pinks and mountain saxifrage. With my binoculars I spotted five izzards — Pyrenean chamois — grazing on a distant mountainside.

The summits of these Catalan mountains are rounded in outline, like the Scottish Highlands, with patches of tired-looking snow still lying in their green hollows. But everything is on a much grander scale. Puigmal, the highest peak in the Cerdagne,

is not far off 3,000 metres. Puigmal, the Evil Mountain, is notorious for its sudden, treacherous mood swings: sunshine one moment, storms the next. Today its dark silhouette stood out sharp and clear against the sky, keeping watch over one of Europe's loneliest frontiers.

At last I reached the long, rolling crest to the west of Puigmal. A path runs along it, marked by cairns. I stood on the frontier and saw the mountains of Spain, blue with distance, marching south into the heat haze towards Barcelona. Further on I came to an old mule track snaking steeply down past a spring known as Dead Man's Fountain, head-

ing for the sunlit valleys far below. Maybe Etienne Lafitte's uncle had once used this route, sneaking through the night with his tobacco and his British fugitives?

I retraced my steps until I

was out of the wind and found a sheltered grassy hollow in which to enjoy the magnificent picnic which Mr Lafitte had provided: omelette aux champignons, pâté, air-dried ham, tomatoes, cheese, cherries.

half a crusty loaf and a goatskin bota of sharp red wine.

Afterwards, lying back in the grass, watching the cloud shadows sailing over the mountainsides, I noticed three black specks in the sky. They were griffon vultures — giant birds with a 2m wingspan — patrolling the mountains in search of carrion.

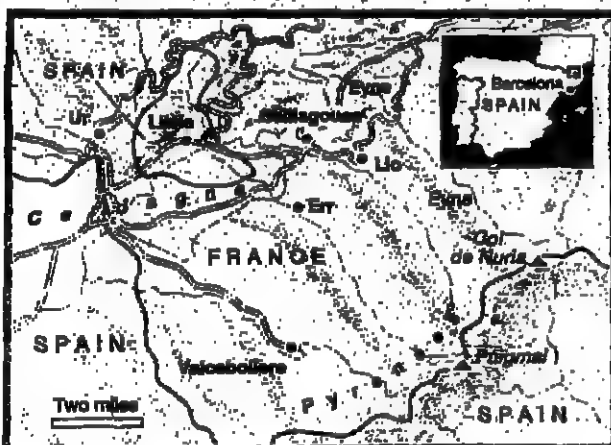
Eagles also frequent this high country, and lower down in the fathomless forests, among the alpen rose glades and old-growth pines, the lynx still lingers like a legend, along with wild boar, pine martens, capercaillie and the *hibou grand duc* or eagle owl, with its gruff voice and glaring orange eyes.

Later during my stay, Mr Lafitte's insistence, I drove to the nearby village of Eynes Valley, a nature reserve renowned for its wild flowers. The walk began in a summer meadow loud with grasshoppers. At the edge of the path a butcher-bird swung on a dog-rose stem. As I followed the rumbling mountain torrent upstream through fragrant pinewoods, the sides of the valley drew closer, with dizzy crags and pinnacles leaning at the clouds.

Here, as in the high meadows above Valcaballera, there were butterflies galore: marbled whites, Scotch argus and Queen of Spain fritillaries with quicksilver underwings. But in the Eynes Valley it is the flowers that take pride of place: wild mauve geraniums, orchids and globe flowers, drifts of blue and yellow gentians, bistort and hay rattle, creamy swags of meadow-sweet, with here and there the magnificent martagon or Turk's-cap lily, the pride of the Pyrenees.

It is one of the loveliest summer walks in Europe.

● Brian Jackman was a guest of Inntavel.



CERDAGNE FACT FILE

■ Inntavel, Hovingham, York YO6 4JZ (01453 628862) in its Inn-Active summer brochure features independent walking holidays in the Cerdagne, including the Eynes Valley and the Auberge Les Ecuries in Valcaballera. Walk options range from six to ten days. Luggage is transported between hotels, and accommodation is half-board, with picnics provided on every walking day. Seven nights, with flights from Gatwick to Perpignan and private transfer, cost from £998. Or you can use the Auberge Les Ecuries in Valcaballera as a base, where self-drive prices for a three-night stay start at £179. Inntavel also offers an accompanied In the Footsteps of the Smugglers walk in August and September (seven nights from £765).

■ Naturetrek (01962 733051) also offers botanical walking trips in the French Pyrenees.

■ Reading: *Song of Roland* (Penguin, £6.99, ISBN 0 140 44532 3), *Waltz and Climb in the Pyrenees*, by Kev Reynolds (Cicerone, £14.99, ISBN 1 852 84133 8), *Michelin Guides Pyrénées Roussillon* (ISBN 2 060 36804 9) and *Pyrénées Aquitaine* (ISBN 2 060 36704 2). In French, £8.99 each. *Pyrenees*, by Marc Dubin (Rough Guides, £8.99, ISBN 1 858 28093 1).

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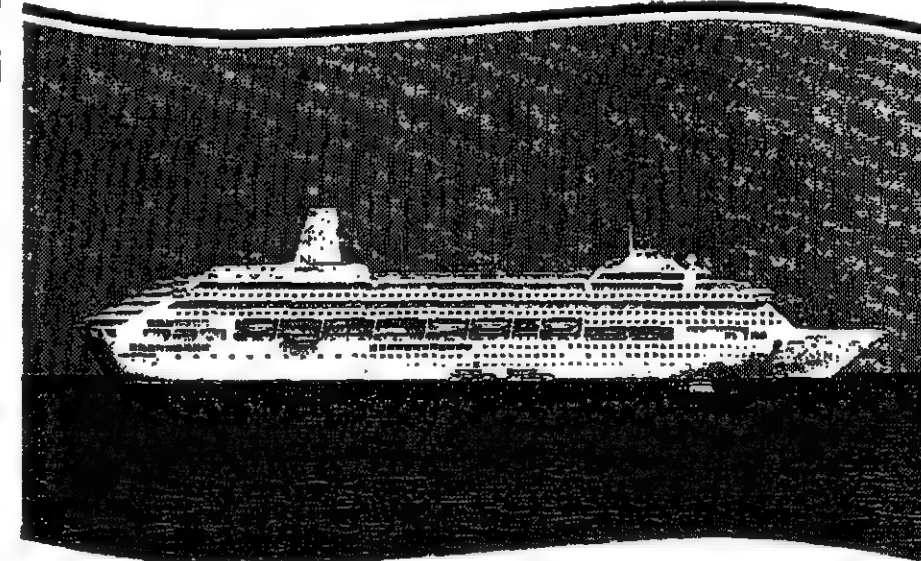
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ICELANDAIR

Alaska: When it's 15C under, the bears are fast asleep but the 'strip-tease' and snowmobiling carry on

Chill out in the deep-freeze

Alaska is an outdoorsy, frontier kind of place where men are men and so are the women. With wrap-around snow vistas and days cut to six hours in mid-winter, at times it can feel as if you are inside a deep-freeze. But to visit in summer would be to wimp out: winter is when the pristine wilderness is at its most dramatic and uncompromising, when the mountains possess a peerless clarity; and — I like a deal — hotel rooms are often half-price.

Alaskans south of the Arctic Circle, enjoying a balmy minus 15C in the winter, go our mushing over iced rivers, spinning light aircraft over hanging glaciers, snowmobiling, climbing frozen waterfalls and fishing through iceholes. The Alaskan philosophy is wrap up warm, get out and enjoy. And, if the weather turns really nasty, Alaskans are good at getting drunk.

I hit town on December 3 after 10 hours in the air. It was midnight in Anchorage and I was on 9am: day was night for me and pretty much for them, too, with darkness falling around 3.40pm and laying in till ten the next morning.

My 17th-floor hotel room looked over a low-slung, gridded city. Streets were compacted snow and more of the white stuff was still falling. The next morning, three minutes from my hotel, I stood looking south over the frozen mudrocks of the Cook Inlet to humpbacked Mount Susitna. Wind gnawed at any exposed flesh and snow swirled off rooftops. Hungry ravens squawked their raucous disputations above office workers languishing their way to work



along the ten-mile coastal trail. Unlike other cities, instead of suburbs to keep it warm Anchorage is surrounded by wilderness — half an hour on a snowmobile north and I would be in serious bear and wolf country among the white-knuckled peaks of the Chugach Mountains.

And town itself was a different species to the generic at home. Walking up 9th Avenue I passed a moose caught up in the Christmas lights on a spruce tree. In someone's back yard I saw a reindeer kept as a pet and taken for daily walks along 10th Avenue. Instead of civic notables, the only bronze statue in town was of a husky signalling the starting line of "the world's last great race" — the 1,000-mile Iditarod.

At the Comingmak Shop I admired shawls and mittens woven by Eskimos from the underhair of the primeval musk oxen; at the Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum, I saw a cribbage board carved from walrus ivory, a coat made of cormorant pelts,

a belt made of caribou teeth and mukluks (boots) made from transparent fish skins.

At night I trawled the bars and found each, like the restaurants, dressed with stuffed moose and grizzlies as well as the carcasses of 300lb halibuts and 50lb salmon. As I sat in one bar, a hat rack belonging to a moose passed by the window. At Fly by Night, a 1980s Miss Alaska by the name of Alice Wellings went through a surreal put-on rather than strip-off routine, ending up fully clothed in hip waders and a halibut wool coat as the crowd bayed, "Put 'em on, put 'em on".

Those inhabiting what they call the Bush disparagingly say Anchorage is only 30 minutes from the real Alaska, so the next morning I left half of the state's miserly 570,000 population behind me and headed out of town on Northern Lights Avenue which fed into Seward Highway. On my right, the second highest tide in the world was on its way out seeking a route through frozen mud and ice. In the summer beluga and orca whales bask here. Snow swirled like smoke across the road.



Onward and upward, climbing frozen waterfalls beside the Seward Highway, only a few miles outside Anchorage.

Then as I rounded a bend, I saw an overturned car in a pillow of snow steaming like some exhausted husky. A door opened heavenward. With snow up to my knees, I helped the driver get his two young daughters and wife out. When I asked if they were all right, the husband laconically replied, "Sure, buddy, snow's good for flipping over in."

At the gold-mining town of Girdwood, the resort of Alyeska had grown up hopeful that skiing would be the new gold mine. A-frame cabins wore 2ft snow moustaches and dagger icicles dangled from overhangs. On the breakfast menu at the Alyeska Bake Shop I found cinnamon rolls instead of reindeer sausage. This was a resort more for alternative types than frontier

people, where local women shun make-up and teach meditation while their husbands work as masseuses when they are not answering air mountain-rescue calls. Alyeska claims to be the lowest ski resort (250ft) in the United States, so you have to endure no two-hour corkscrew drives

to reach it. Yet it still manages regularly to figure in the top four for snow coverage.

It allegedly has the best view of any US ski area: from the Glacier Terminal there is a panoramic sweep across the Chugach Mountains, Turnagain Arm and seven hanging glaciers. You skip altitude tiredness here, it is usually warmer than at Jackson Hole, and by mid-February it has the longest days of any American ski resort.

Apart from regular downhill, telemark and cross-country skiing, Alyeska boasted other activities from storking (getting pulled on skis by dogs) to mushing and snowmobiling. So, having swooped down wonderfully unpopulated

slopes for a few hours, I hired snow shoes and set off to explore the wilderness.

The bears, I had been emphatically told, were hibernating. But, being a sceptic by nature, I nervously fingered the just-in-case pepper spray I had in my pocket each time another slab of snow crashed from a tree, rending the cathedral silence. My worst fear was that I might wake one of the black bears fond of the Cajun spicy diet provided by the "dumper" outside the Double Musky restaurant, rendering my spray more of an enticement than a deterrent.

Two hours' drive away in the Matanuska-Susitna region, I explored the silent, ethereal Hatcher Pass on a snow-

mobile, then lunched overlooking the Matanuska Glacier, a miniature Siberia 26 miles long and three miles across whose massive crevasses looked like a wolf's claw marks from the Long Rifle Lodge.

The people I met on my Alaskan odyssey were as

responsible as the places I visited. There was Yukon Don, a former gold miner and trapper, who had mined the entire 2,000 miles of the Yukon River and wore a beardskin coat and a necklace made from bear's teeth and claws and the vertebrae of salmon. There was former psychiatric nurse Dan Little who moved out to the Bush to work in a bar where he said he got "paid better" for seeing the "same people". There was Alison, a fourth-generation Athabaskan Indian, who showed me a picture of her Russian-speaking grandmother dressed in animal pelt and proudly holding up two rabbits she had just trapped. And there was Jan, a typical inlander, who had left her job as an interpreter at the Los Angeles County Jail after meeting her future husband skydiving.

PAUL ABSE

FACT FILE

- Northwest Airlines (01424 224400) flies to Anchorage from most UK airports. Return flights cost from £575 plus £31 departure tax.
- Car rental costs from £60 per week (£126 with proper cover and taxes) through Northwest. A fly-drive package with 14 nights' accommodation costs from £1,184 based on two sharing.
- Double rooms at Anchorage's Hotel Captain Cook (907 276 6000) cost from £69; at Yukon Don's (907 376 7472), one of Alaska's best inns, in the Matanuska Valley near Wasilla £39-£63 (with breakfast) at the five-star Westin Alyeska Prince Hotel from £90 — rooms sleep up to four (bookable in UK on 0171-408 0636); Black John's Cabin (with kitchen and two double beds) can be booked through Three Rivers Accommodations (tel/fax 907 733 2741) for £44.
- Crystal (0831-399 5144) has one week at Westin Alyeska Prince plus flights and transfers from £579.
- Things to do: Lucky Husky Racing Kennel (907 495 6470) for mushing in Mat-Su Valley near Willow. Half-hour £30, one hour £45, full day with campfire lunch £145 per person. Book ahead.
- Two and a half hour Kenai Flavors winter cruise with Renown Charters (907 272 1961), £35 departing daily from Seward at midday lunch included.
- North Star Treks (907 745 3144) has cross-country ski trails.
- Easy Ride Rentals (907 892 6888) hires snowmachines from £26 per hour on Big Lake. It also features snowmobile holiday trips for £1,970 per person including food and accommodation. One-hour sightseeing flights over Mount McKinley with K2 Aviation (907 733 2299) cost £48 per person.
- Reading: *Arctic Dreams*, by Barry Lopez (Pan, £7.99, ISBN 0 330 29538 1). *To the Top of Denali*, by Bill Sherwood (Alaska Northwest Books, £8.95, ISBN 0 882 40402 4).

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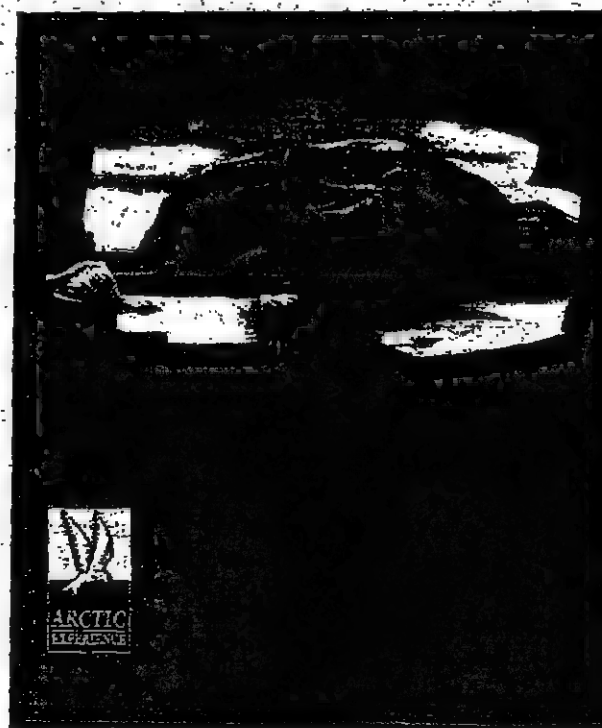
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AIR NEW ZEALAND

Britain: On a hike from south to north, Robin Neillands recommends delightful spots away from the crowds

Secrets of a long-distance walker

TO SUGGEST that England is an undiscovered country is to invite ridicule. England is not Antarctica, though it sometimes felt like it last May when I was walking from the south coast to Hadrian's Wall. On that journey I passed through some surpassingly beautiful country, so, because good things should be shared, here is a selection of little known places well worth visiting. There are plenty more like these for those who make the time to look around.

SOUTH DORSET AND THE FLEET

The Fleet is a great saltwater lake trapped off the Dorset coast by the Chisel Bank. I came on it in the evening, when the air was still, the clouds were pink-tipped by the setting sun and, apart from squadrons of swans floating serenely on the water, the place was deserted — and this only a couple of miles from the busy resort of Weymouth.

Apart from tranquility, the Fleet has history: it has been a nature reserve since 1393 and the swans are still protected and cared for by the Swannery at Abbotsford. The little church beside the shore at Old Fleet is all that remains of the village, destroyed in the last century by a tidal wave, but the church was a haunt of smugglers and features in John Meade Falkner's classic tale *Moonfleet*.

South Dorset is a special place in a much-neglected county. Dorchester and the Thomas Hardy country pull in the crowds, but The Fleet is the place to linger.

SEVERN VALLEY

A good way to see the Severn Valley is to follow the Severn Way footpath. I walked north on it for several days, through fine towns such as Tewkesbury, with its ancient abbey, and Worcester, with its cathedral overlooking the county cricket ground, then up-river to places like Stourport-on-Severn, a Mecca for river craft, and Bewdley.

Bewdley is small and pretty and lies at the southern end of the Severn Valley Railway, one of those newly restored lines that give character to the countryside. Because it was Saturday and the engines were "in steam", I took the train up to Hampton Loade, where one of the last Severn ferries carries passengers to the eastern bank: fare, 20p.

The Severn Valley around Bewdley is a little visited part of England, and the Severn Valley Guest House in Bewd-



Robin Neillands pauses in the northern Pennines on his long walk of discovery from the coast of Dorset to the north of Cumbria and across the Scottish border to Portpatrick

ley, run by a passionate railway buff, is a good place to stay while touring.

STAFFORDSHIRE WAY

This is another of England's under-used footpaths, which I picked up near Codsall and followed to Uttoxeter, cutting through Cannock Chase, to skirt Birmingham, and head up towards the Peaks. The towns are not pretty but there is a lot of good, open country, ideal for gentle walking, with plenty of pleasant villages and an abundance of cheerful B&Bs: one that sticks in the mind had a notice on the bedroom door saying: "Guests are kindly requested not to do their ironing on the carpet."

The tourists who come this

way are heading for the Peak District, but the 92-mile-long Staffordshire Way is ideal for a one-week, crowd-free, autumn walk, and I commend it.

WEST OF THE PENNINES

The Pennine Way, north of Buxton, is partly a bog and partly paved, and not all that attractive. Fortunately, the lower country to the west is delightful and threaded with towpaths and footpaths. Further west lies a great swath of industrial cities around Manchester, but there is plenty of open moorland here and it is easy, and fun, to keep away from the cities, either using canal towpaths, or tramping on moorland routes such as the Oldham Way and the Burnley Way.

The Green Ash Hotel in Delph is a good place to stay, but other places to mark on the map are Uppermill and Denshaw for exploring the country to the north into Calderdale. Perfect.

AROUND MORECAMBE BAY

Morecambe is one of the great northwestern tourist resorts, but north of Morecambe the crowds thin out. The big attraction of Morecambe Bay,

apart from the spectacular sunsets, is the walk across the sands with Cedric Robinson, the Queen's Guide, who leads parties across the wide and treacherous estuary of the River Kent, from Arnside to Grange-over-Sands.

Arnside is a delightful little resort, small with just a promenade lined with guest houses, pubs and small restaurants, but a splendid spot for walkers and birdwatchers. The whole area is spattered with nature reserves, flocks of wading birds parade across the sands, and those who fancy a spot of adventure can join Mr Robinson for his weekly bay walks.

NORTHERN LAKES

The golden rule in the Lake District is to head for the high fells as soon as you arrive and avoid the whole place in summer when it becomes overcrowded. In early spring it is magnificent.

I spent two days here, based at Laurel Cottage, a superb B&B in Windermere, touring into the northern fells with the Mountain Goat company, which runs tours throughout Lakeland.

There are superb walks everywhere in the Lake District: around Buttermere and Conistone, over Helvellyn and around the Langdales, but one

not to miss is the full day tramp up Scafell Pike, at 977m (3,200ft) the highest mountain in England. A day up on Scafell, with sweeping views over the lakes below and a couple of well-earned pints at the Dungeon Ghyll Hotel on the way back... Try it.

NORTHERN PENNINES

This is hill-walking country, a place for cheerful people wearing serious boots. I walked there over the Roman road called High Street from Windermere to Askham, and then on to Dufton, at the foot of the Pennines, both villages full of 17th-century cottages.

At Dufton I picked up the Pennine Way and followed it for 20 miles over the open hills around Crossfell to Aisdon, the highest market town in England. All these places have good pubs and inexpensive B&Bs, but the great attraction is outstandingly beautiful country, with a merciful absence of crowds.

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Hadrian's Wall marked the end of my walk but, before I headed back south, I crossed the Scottish border into Dumfries and Galloway and to Knockinaam Lodge, a small

hotel at Portpatrick near Stranraer. Knockinaam is on the beach, without another house in miles, with good food and an amazing array of malt whiskies in the bar. The main tourist attractions up here are golf and the Robbie Burns Country, but Knockinaam is well off the too-well-beaten track, in country where subtropical gardens are warmed by the Gulf Stream, where long empty beaches host flocks of seabirds and where, just a few miles across the ocean, are the green hills of Northern Ireland.

After four, hard weeks travelling across England on foot, it was magic.

BRITAIN

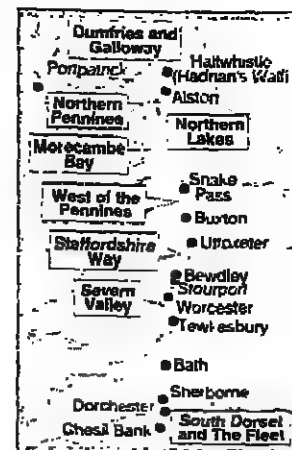
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FACT FILE

- B&B prices range from £16-£25 a night.
- The guide *The Staffordshire Way*, by Les Lumsdon and Chris Rushton, is published by Sigma Leisure, Wilmslow, Cheshire (01625 531038) at £6.95.
- OS maps of routes and footpaths mentioned from bookshops or Stanfords Map Shop, 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2, (mail order, 0171-636 1321).
- Full information on Arnside, the Lake District and the north Pennines from the Cumbria Tourist Board, Ashleigh, Holly Road, Windermere (01539 444444).
- Details on crossing Morecambe Bay from Cedric Robinson, the Queen's Guide (015395 32165).
- Mountain Goat Tours, Windermere, 01539 445161, Laurel Cottage, Windermere, 01539 45594, Knockinaam Lodge, Portpatrick, near Stranraer, 01776 510471, Severn Valley Guest House, Bewdley, 01299 402192, Green Ash Hotel, Delph, 01457 871035.
- Detailed information available at the tourist information centres in the places mentioned.

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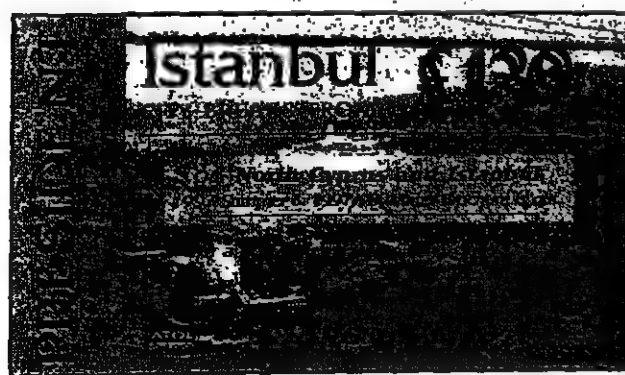
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Travel continued from page 16

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CHESS

by Raymond Keene

LAST MONTH'S Las Palmas tournament featured the top six players in the world, making it one of the strongest ever held. By winning it by a margin of a clear point, the world champion, Garry Kasparov, demonstrated that he is still the dominant force, and that his mediocre results over the past year have been blips rather than a trend. He must have been particularly delighted with his win against Vassily Ivanchuk, who has twice beaten him in the past year and a half.

W: Kasparov. B: Ivanchuk
1 e4 Nf6. Alekhine's Defence is a particularly challenging line to adopt in a crucial game.

2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6
4 Nf3 g6

This is the modern way of handling this defence. Black develops his bishop on the flank and prepares to pummel White's extended pawn centre.

5 Bc4 c6 6 0-0 Bg7
7 h3 0-0 8 exd6 exd6
9 Re1 Ne7 10 Bg5 Bf6
11 Bh6 Re8 12 Rxd6 Nxd6

Black's gyrations with his king's knight appear eccentric, but he has created a situation in which the pawn structure is symmetrical and his development does not lag far behind White's. In other words, a draw would not be unexpected, and a draw with Black against Kasparov is quite a success.

13 Bb3. A deep move, preparing to undermine Black's centre with c4. The seemingly more natural 13 Nc3 allows 13... d5 when the position really is level.

14 Bc4 d5 15 c4 dxc4
16 Bxc4 Nf6 17 Qd2

The final reinforcement of White's attack along the e2-g8 diagonal. Once Black's pawn on f7 falls, his case becomes hopeless.

18 Qd2 Nf6 19 Qd3 Nf6
20 Qd4 Nf6 21 Qd5 Nf6
22 Qd6 Nf6 23 Qd7 Nf6
24 Qd8 Nf6 25 Qd9 Nf6
26 Qd0 Nf6 27 Qd1 Nf6
28 Qd2 Nf6 29 Qd3 Nf6
30 Qd4 Nf6 31 Qd5 Nf6
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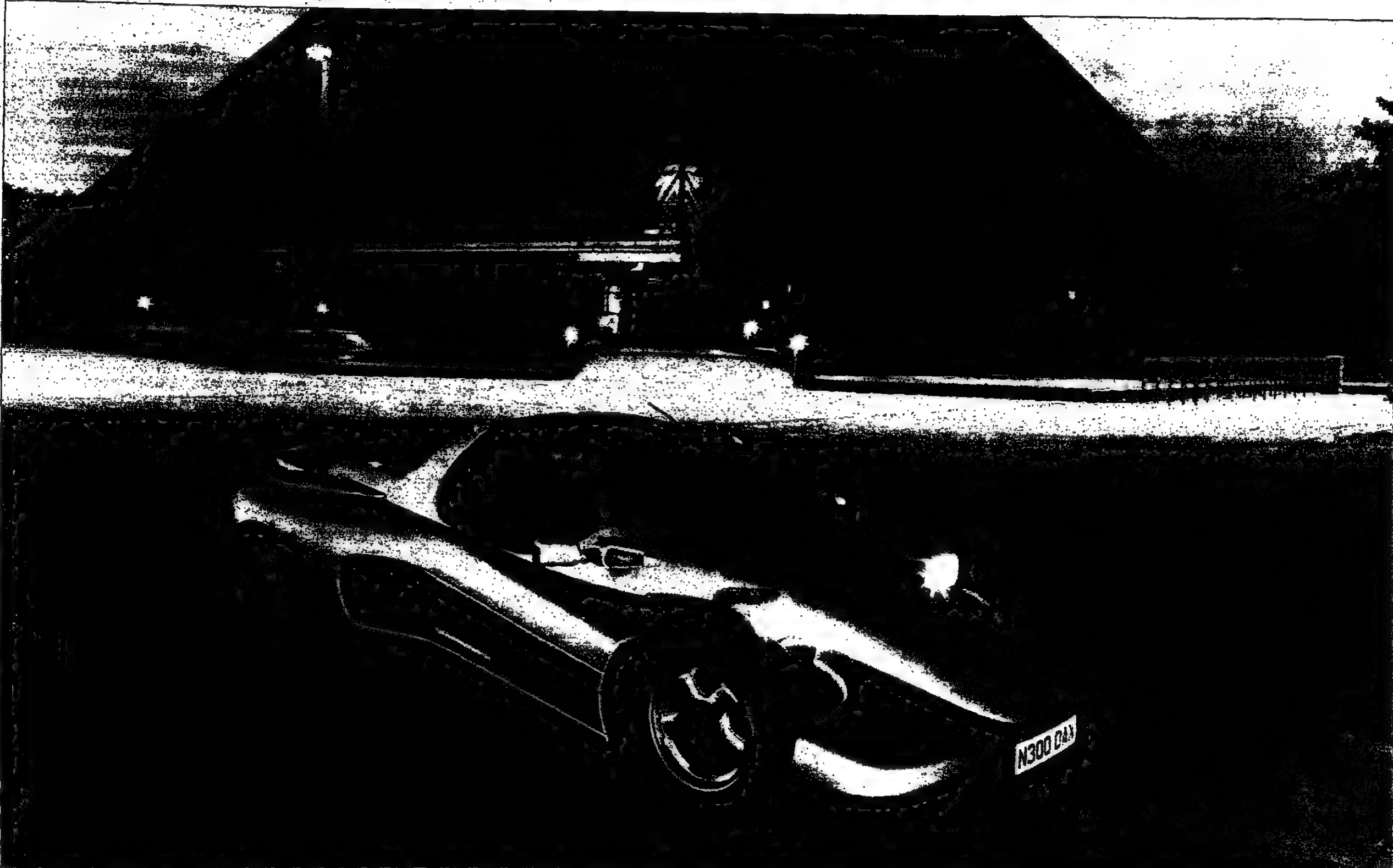
THE TIMES CAR 97

The latest big ideas come from Toyota engineers
Page 8



SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

Safely kitted out for the road



The Dax Kamala's sleek aluminium body is designed round a 2-litre, 340bhp Ford Cosworth turbo unit. It does 0-60mph in 3.9 seconds, about the same as a Ferrari F50, and has a top speed of over 150mph. Cost: about £12,000 plus your time

The photograph above might look like the scene outside a powerbroker's office in downtown Dallas: the chief exec's supercar parked proudly outside the state-of-the-art building. In fact it's a kit car pictured outside a swimming pool in Bedford.

The kit car industry is largely based on selling two things that most of us think we can't afford: looks that can thrill and performance to make you gasp. The Dax Kamala in the picture has both: its sleek aluminium body is designed round a 2-litre, 340bhp Ford Cosworth turbo unit. It does 0-60mph in 3.9 seconds, about the same as a Ferrari F50, and has a top speed of over 150mph. It would cost you about £12,000 and several hours of careful assembly work.

Now the world of this and other customised cars is facing its biggest upheaval since the recession as new safety regulations come into force. Until now, most of these often eccentric vehicles needed no more than a standard MoT test before being allowed on the road. From July 1, however, all amateur-built and kit cars must undergo a £200 safety check before they can be registered for use.

The Kamala is produced by D.J. Sportscars of Harlow, Essex, which, like most kit car-makers, is keen to

They offer style and performance with an affordable price tag. Now kit cars will have added official approval, reports Eve-Ann Prentice

embrace the safety rules. The car was designed by former Ford engineer, Peter Walker, who wanted to "produce something strikingly different". The project took four years from the first sketches to production last year and so far five have been made.

While it may seem astonishing that sometimes powerful machines have been allowed on the public highway without facing any safety checks, it is probably not belated common sense alone that has dictated the move. For the new regulation comes into force just five months before similar rules are to be applied throughout the European Community.

The new safety check, known as Single Vehicle Approval, will also apply to cars imported to Britain which are less than three years old and therefore do not have to undergo an MoT test.

The checks will be "far more rigorous than an MoT", according to a Department of Transport spokesman, and include inspections of steering, doors and latches, exhaust and smoke emissions, lamps and lights, mirrors, anti-theft devices, seats and seatbelts, brakes, silencers,

glass, tyres, interior fittings, bumpers, speedometers, derailleurs and wipers, as well as the vehicle's general design, weight and construction.

John Bowis, the Road Safety Minister, who announced the details just before Christmas, said: "The scheme will bring personally imported, amateur-built and kit car vehicles generally into line with mass-produced vehicles in meeting the high standards we expect, without placing an undue burden on individuals and small businesses."

The scheme has been greeted with enthusiasm by most in the industry, not least because companies producing the kits will also be allowed for the first time to sell up to 50 fully-assembled vehicles a year. Until now, manufacturers have been allowed to sell a maximum of just nine fully-built cars, all of which had to be demonstration models.

The new system is also seen as giving the kit car industry official recognition by acknowledging that vehicles passing the checks are roadworthy. "The industry can see the benefits," says Ian Stern, Editor of

Which Kit? magazine. "It has emerged from the recession leaner, but fitter. You rarely see kit cars on the market now which are not pretty good quality."

Until the new rules come into force, there are two types of vehicle approval, both prohibitively expensive for small-scale manufacturers. The first is full EU-type approval which all mass car manufacturers' vehicles must undergo, and the second is a low-volume type designed for specialist marques producing fewer than 500 cars a year.

Mark Wooldridge of the Association of Specialist Car Manufacturers, says: "The SVA will make it far more difficult for shoddy cars to get on the road and this will give us a seal of approval." Wooldridge, who produces Quantum kit cars from his base in Birmingham, has already had his vehicles looked at. "We failed on a couple of minor things, such as hood catches which were slightly too sharp, and the exhaust, which had a sharp edge and was deemed to have been able to injure someone in an accident, but to put these things right only cost me £20-£25 per car."

"What has amazed me is that the people drafting the legislation have asked us what we think. It has been very good, commonsense stuff."

John Hoyle of NG Cars at Epsom, which makes kits of traditional-style cars "looking a little like a Morgan", is also upbeat about the new rules. "I originally thought it would spoil the look of the car but once you go into it there are solutions," he said. "It will put no more than 5 per cent on the cost of our cars, which sell at between £13,000 and £20,000."

While there are about 250 kit car models in Britain, made by around 150 companies, only 60 or so manufacturers produce more than 20 cars a year from dedicated premises and only four or five make over 150 a year. Nonetheless, interest is high, with 42,000 people visiting the National Kit Car Show last May.

So is SVA good news all round? "The sad thing is it will knock out the real extroverts producing weird and wonderful cars in their garages," says Stern.

Peter Filby, publisher and chairman of Which Kit? magazine, adds: "We British are very inventive and really started the kit car industry, though America was very close behind. There are thousands of men out there who want nothing more than to make their own motor car."

Why be boring when you can be seen in something Special?

With its huge front wings, roll cage, on-board fire extinguisher and motorist's, frustrated trying to buy the car they want off the shelf, build their own instead.

The Thompson Special is fully taxed, MoT'd, and insured. With headlights, indicators and number plates, it is fully road as well as race legal, which means its proud owner can drive it to a circuit, race, and then drive home again.

Thompson, 39, a former technician with Racal, built the car himself at home in New Malden, Surrey. The road to the Special started when he began a course learning how to race single-seater cars, and was bitten by the single-seater bug.

The trouble was, he could either go on taking lessons. Continued on page 3

carbon-copy, safe and comfortable, but yawningly tedious modern cars, the home-grown machine is thriving as motorists, frustrated trying to buy the car they want off the shelf, build their own instead.

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Complaints from driving schools about reforms to the way learners are tested suggest there is still plenty of scope for improvement

It's time the test was privatised

A new driving test was introduced in July last year and six months later, on January 1 this year, a number of important changes were made to it. There is nothing wrong with revising a scheme, indeed fine tuning was bound to be needed, but I am mystified as to why the test methodology remains rooted in the era of the Model T (not that you had to pass a test then).

In Car 97 last week, several driving schools which run intensive courses complained about one change, which involves the need to take a theory test before drivers can book, let alone take, a practical. This knocks seven bells out of intensive courses, which are predicated on getting through the whole gruelling learning-testing process in a week. I sympathise with the

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

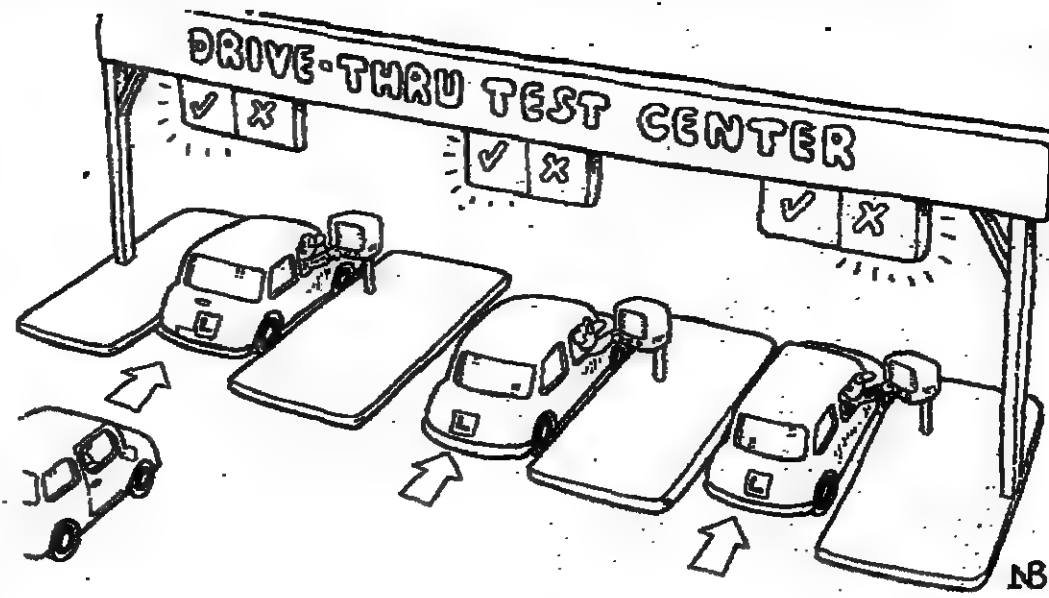
instructors, but their problems are not the only reason why changes ought to be made.

The theory test should be taken on a computer screen. Even computer-literate people could handle sitting in front of a terminal clicking on the answers in a

multiple-choice test, and the result would be available immediately.

There are two reasons why the present test is conducted with pen and paper and then taken away for marking. One is the cost of installing computers; the other is the legal requirement that the driving test be "equally accessible to all candidates". Of course, there are people, especially elderly people, who are intimidated by computers. But because some people have to take the test on paper does not mean everyone has to: a combination of methods can be used. That leaves the cost argument, though I doubt whether putting a basic computer in every test centre would cost any more than employing an army of people to print, distribute and mark test papers.

Still, let us suppose that cost is a real problem. There is plenty of



money and plenty of sophisticated technology in industry, so the answer is to privatise the driving test. Now get up off the floor and listen to the logic.

The test is already half privatised. Although it is administered by the Driving Standards Agency, the day to day running of the test was put out to tender and

DriveSafe Services Ltd won the contract. There is no reason why the DSA should not continue to have a regulatory role, with the private sector running the tests and putting up the money in exchange for potential profits.

Organisations like the Institute of Advanced Motorists, the AA and the RAC — as well as

DriveSafe — could be encouraged to form consortia to bid for the test. I see no reason why leading driving schools should not join these consortia: the argument that they have a pecuniary interest in test results is made irrelevant by the fact that failing candidates is bad for their reputations. There are those within the DSA

who think that unless they get on with a more technological approach, the pressure to privatise will increase. This is why I fully expect the theory test to be conducted on computer screens within five years. But a change of government is only five months away and Tony Blair will quickly face the fact that promises cost money.

The privatisation of the driving test by a Labour government would be among the greatest ironies, a Thatcherite principle given its ultimate expression. But I would not bet against it happening and I hope that it does.

Alan Copps and myself will shortly force ourselves to eat a decent lunch for once while we pore over your hundreds of entries for the competition to give the Ford Ka a decent nickname. The champagne winner will be announced in a week or two. Meanwhile, my thanks to the ten people from my eldest daughter's office who submitted suggestions, knowing of course that I would never live down allowing them into the competition proper. I expect my daughter — suggested — Ford Katastrophe because she drives a Vauxhall, but Lennie Stewart's Ford Karma has a nice ring to it.



New regulations for the caravan towing test are complicated, but the Caravan Club can offer newcomers expert advice on safety measures and how to avoid the pitfalls

Before we start, who are you?

Drivers fail the pressure test When low inflation can cause disaster

MILLIONS of motorists are running an unnecessary risk of an accident this winter through poorly inflated tyres, according to a survey of more than 2,000 cars, writes Alan Copps.

Nine out of ten cars inspected were found to have at least one tyre wrongly inflated and 14 per cent of those were so badly wrong as to jeopardise handling and control. If the sample was representative of the 22 million car population, that means three million drivers are running around on potentially lethal wheels, says the RAC.

The most alarming conclusion of the survey was that almost a third of motorists never check their tyre pressures. The Association of Chief Police Officers, which has joined the

Tread Safely campaign, points out that driving with defective tyres is an offence leading to a possible £2,500 fine.

The survey was carried out for the National Tyre Distributors' Association, which is offering a free inflation service and tyre pressure advice at all its 2,800 member centres across the country. Half those asked said they knew the recommended pressures, but only one in four said they checked them weekly, which is regarded as a safe minimum.

Edmund King, head of campaigns for the RAC, said: "Tyres must not be forgotten simply because they do not trigger warning lights in the dashboard. They are the only contact a car has with the road."

Alan Copps and Eve-Ann Prentice on beating the driving test cheats and learning to tow your caravan in safety

heavier vehicles which came into force on January 1. The DSA has been criticised for not publicising these changes sufficiently. The main change means that candidates for all forms of driving licence must now pass a theory test before they can apply for a practical test.

The new driving test rules have also focused attention on the growing number of courses to help those baffled or intimidated by the changes. Some of the latest are aimed at caravan-owners and prospective car drivers who may need special help to get through the theory test.

Learner car drivers and motorcyclists who are worried about the theory test can now take special courses at Theory Learning Centres which are being set up around the country. The centres, the brainchild of Jon Gross, a former development manager of the Motor Schools' Association, offer an unusual "guaranteed pass"

policy. If any new driver fails the theory test after taking the course, he or she can return for as many free lessons as it takes them to pass. A complete course of twenty 45-minute lessons costs £120. For information, telephone 0121-244 0442.

The new caravan rules are complicated. Licence-holders who passed their driving tests before January 1 are not affected, but anyone learning now needs to pass a towing test if the weight of their vehicle and trailer or caravan combination is more than 3,500kg. People who want to tow less than that combined weight need not take the towing test, provided the trailer does not weigh more fully laden than the empty towing vehicle.

The towing test involves a simple reverse S manoeuvre similar to that taken by large goods vehicle drivers, and a hitching and unhitching test. The Caravan Club is running a series of courses that begin in March and caravans are provided. "All the participants have to provide is a car fitted with towing bracket and electric, plus extension mirrors if the existing car mirrors will not give an adequate rear view down the sides of the caravan," says a spokesman.

The one-and-a-half day practical caravanning course for "the less experienced" costs £55 and a one-day manoeuvring course for those with "manoeuvring difficulties only" is £45. For more information contact the Caravan Club's Events department on 01342 326944.

More advice for caravanners will be available at the Caravan Leisure Home Show at Manchester's G-Mex centre from next Thursday to Sunday. Officials from the Caravan Club, Greater Manchester Police and the RAC will be on hand to give information about the new test requirements, the best tow cars and safety and security.

Unsuitable tow cars, poor loading of caravans and insufficient attention to mirrors when towing are among the faults blamed by police for accidents involving caravans. Although towing a caravan for the first time can be daunting for many drivers, the Caravan Council says many pitfalls can be overcome through following a few simple rules.

First, it is important to match your car to the weight of the caravan, which for the less-experienced should not exceed 85 per cent of the car's kerbside weight. However, engine capacity and gearing are also crucial and this is one reason why expert advice should be sought. The noseweight of the caravan also needs to be checked against the recommended noseweight for the tow car.

In loading it is important to keep the weight in the caravan low down and as close to the axle as possible. Emptying water tanks and toilets helps reduce weight. The alignment of car and caravan is also vital. They should be level when viewed from the side. Mirrors should be set wide enough to see right down the sides of the caravan and, if they fail this test, extension mirrors should be fitted before setting off.

Box Office for Caravan Show: 0171-373 3733.

● LONDON
A406 Upper Edmonton. Major roadworks on Angel Road (North Circular Road) over the Lea Valley Viaduct.
A5 Kingston. Northbound lane closure on the Kingston bypass between Sharnon Corner (A298) and Coombe Lane Junction (A298) for work on Carriers Bridge.
M1 Hendon area. Major roadworks at Five Ways Corner, with no access to or from the A1 Great North Way.
A504 Hendon area. Roadworks on Hendon Lane, with no access from the A504 Finchley Lane or the A1 Great North Way.
A232 Wellington. Roadworks on Croydon Road around the junction with Manor Road.
● SOUTH-EAST
A330 Ascot, Berkshire. Roadworks to widen the road and make a new roundabout. Temporary lights in place.
M40 Buckinghamshire. Long-term roadworks with a contraflow between junction 1a (M25) and junction 3 (Wycombe East).
A27 Brighton. Overnight (10pm-6am) maintenance work on the Brighton bypass between the Hangleton Junction and Ditchling Road Bridge.
M27 Hampshire. Long-term roadworks with lane closures and a contraflow at times between junction 8 (Southampton) and junction 10 (Fareham).
A2 Canterbury. Roadworks and various lane closures in both directions for bridge maintenance.
M25 Surrey. Restrictions and lane closures both ways between Godstone and the A3 as major widening work continues.
● SOUTH-WEST
A35 Christchurch, Dorset Bypass. Lane closure between Fountain Way and Stony Lane roundabout.
M32 Gloucestershire. Long-term roadworks with southbound contraflow at peak times between junction 1 (Bristol Ring Road, Hambrook) and junction 2 (Stapleford).
M5 Gloucestershire. Major roadworks with only one lane open at the roundabout junction with the A419. Also contraflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge.
M5 Somerset. One lane closed northbound for communications work.
A46 north of Bath, Somerset. Reduced to one lane both ways at Treetops, between Bath and the A420.
A338 Salisbury, Wiltshire area. Lane closure both ways on New Bridge Road at Hemham.
A1 Alconbury, Cambridgeshire. Reduced to one lane northbound during maintenance work at Alconbury Hills (A14/A804), as is the A14.
A6 Lockington, Leicestershire. Major roadworks and a contraflow, with only one lane open each way.
A14 Nottingham. Off-peak (8.30am-4pm) roadworks and lane closures in both directions between the Railway Station and Broad Street.
A500 Staffordshire. Stoke area. Contraflow with only one lane open each way between Talke (A34) and Longport (A527 North).
A45 West Midlands. Major roadworks at junction 2 Dudley (A409/A4123 Oldbury) closing southbound entry and northbound exit slip roads.

● NORTH
M6 Cheshire. One lane closed each way over the Thelwall Viaduct.
M6 Greater Manchester. Bridge maintenance work between junctions 25 (Wigan) and 27 (Standish) with a 50mph limit.
M53 Merseyside. Bridge maintenance work at junction 2 (Birkenhead) with only one lane open each way on the Merston Spur.
M1 West Yorkshire. Long-term roadworks continue around the Leeds junction with lane and speed restrictions. Delays on the M1, M621 and Dewsbury Road.
● WALES
A482 Aberarcon. Ceredigion. Upper Aberarcon Bridge on South Road is closed for reconstruction work.
A470 north of Caer Gwed, Merthyr Tydfil. Temporary lights on Brecon Road for major works; 40mph limit on A465 at Caer Gwed.
A485 Port Talbot, north of Neath. Contraflow between Aberdulas (A4230) and Neath (A474).
M4 Swansea. Carmarthenway reduced to one lane in both directions for roadworks between Swansea and Llaneli.
A472 Pontypool, Torfaen. Contraflow between Pontypool and the Heron Roundabout.
● SCOTLAND
A837 Morriston, Angus. Roadworks and restrictions in both directions on Hillside.
M8 Edinburgh. Major roadworks, with lane closures on the roundabout at Junction 2 (Newbridge Spur, M9).
M8 Glasgow. Overnight (9pm-6am) eastbound entry slip roads closed for roadworks at Charing Cross and Great Western Road.
A92 Tay Road Bridge, Dundee. Maintenance work in place at the bridges. Also lane closures southbound.
A9 Greenloaning, Perth & Kinross. Contraflow four miles east of Dundee.

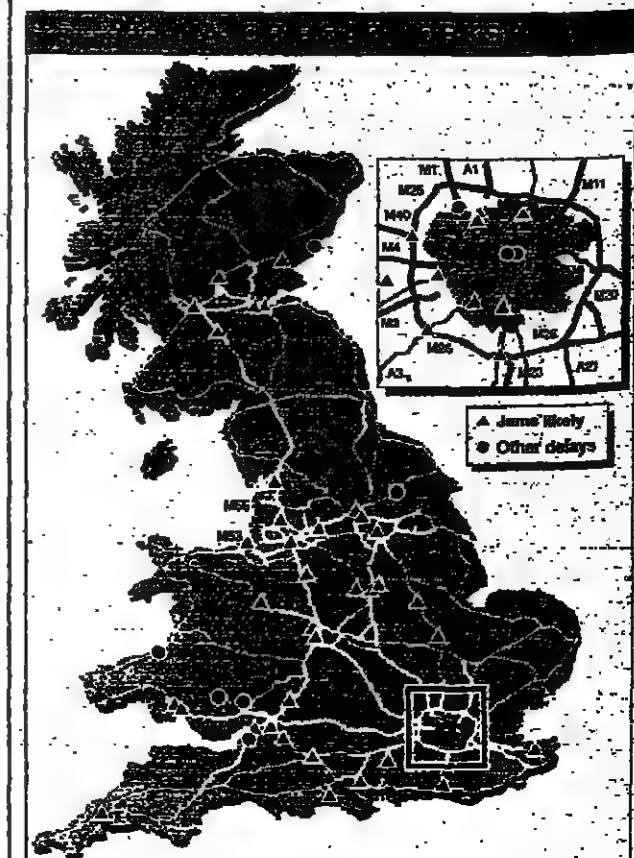
AUTOFAX by David Long and Les Evans

FOR A RACE IN 1902, CHARLES JARROT REPAIRED HIS CAR USING BITS OF AN HOTEL BEDSIDE TABLE WHICH HE HAD SNAILED OUT IN HIS TROUSERS.

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Opera star Della Jones tells Alasdair Steven about her quest to discover a very rare and elusive animal

Has anyone seen a Qwunkalumpas?

STEERING COLUMN

If you have heard a rather fine soprano trilling in the car next to you when you pulled up at traffic lights recently, it could have been Della Jones. She likes to practise at the wheel for her lead role in Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, which opens tonight at the Coliseum in London.

In reality, she is a girl who is proud of her Welsh origins and has made it to the top of the international operatic tree. She has sung the most demanding mezzo-soprano roles in the world's leading opera houses as well as "doing" the Last Night of the Proms in 1993 and making many records. After studying at the Royal College of Music, she won, among other prizes, the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship.

She has sung with all the UK opera companies, especially Welsh National and English National. She sang the demanding role of Baba the Turk in the acclaimed Welsh National production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, which was brought triumphantly last year to Covent Garden. She has often appeared at the Geneva Opera House and "the gorgeous" La Fenice in Venice. She continues a hectic concert and recital schedule. Tonight's English National Opera production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers* by Howard Davies presents her with a hugely demanding role but one she knows well, having sung it at Nantes two years ago.

How did you first learn to drive?

In a square yellow thing. I think it was called a Hillman Minx. I learnt on an automatic and have always driven an automatic. I soon realised after becoming an opera singer that rehearsal rooms and theatres are far apart. I was rehearsing *Carmen* for the ENO and that involved several changes of tubes etc. So I gripped my teeth and passed the test first time. I was

fearless then. Hyde Park Corner and the like never worried me. High streets with drivers trying to find a parking place are more of a trial.

What was your first car?

An Austin Maestro. I was doing Opera North, WNO and ENO all at once, so I had to learn the motorways of Britain fast. But everything that could go wrong with that car — it was new — went wrong. It broke down everywhere. Eventually I had a Mike Capon in British Leyland's complaints office. I rang up reversed charges and told him where I was and he sent out a mechanic. This went on for six months. It broke down for good in Swansea and BL offered me either my money back or a new car.

What car do you drive now?

We have two, a Volvo Estate and a Citroën BX. My husband is a sound recordist, so we choose whichever is the most suitable for the day. The Citroën is always full of clutter. Mostly my seven-year-old's.

Do you enjoy driving?

I love it. I put on Radio 4 and listen away. With that I can cope with traffic jams, snarls and motorway gridlocks no trouble at all.

What is your dream car?

Bright egg yolk colour. Any make. But it has to have wings; when I drive my son to school we pretend the car has wings so that he isn't late. I confess that stretch limos are quite fun in the States, but I wouldn't pay for them every day of the year.

What is your most hated car?

One that breaks down.

What is your worst habit in a car?

Singing. Loudly. I do occasion-



Della Jones: "I occasionally shout at other drivers, but I love sitting there making up cadenzas for a Handel or Rossini aria. Other drivers at traffic lights look amazed, but I carry on"

ally shout at other drivers, but I love sitting there making up cadenzas for a Handel or Rossini aria. Other drivers at traffic lights often look amazed, but I carry on.

What infuriates you most about other drivers?

That they exist. Drivers who hog your backside and flash

on a motorway. Then there's the awful bunch who delight in coming up really close on an open but twisty road and, because they know the road, flash their lights and honk their horn.

What is the most unusual thing you have done in a car?

The soprano Valerie Master-

son and I were being driven to a concert in Spain and got caught up in the most horrendous traffic jam. We had to change into our party frocks in the back of the car. We gave strict instructions to the taxi driver to keep his eyes to the front. We arrived on time and looking great. My son and I often go out for drives in search of the Qwunkalumpas,

a rare breed of animal which no one else has heard of. We are the only people who know about them or can see them! It's also our word and no one else has heard about this rare breed. We can be driving along and he will suddenly shout "Mummy, there's a Qwunkalumpas!" So I stop and we rush off. We do our searching on traffic free roads!

Have you any points on your licence?

No. I am a good girl, I am.

What do you listen to on your car radio/cassette while driving?

I am hooked on Radio 4, as I said. The rule in this house is that the dial must remain on

Radio 4. If I am driving home after a concert or performance, I listen to the World Service, which I always try to catch when I am abroad.

What is your worst/favourite car advertisement?

Never look or listen to them. I can't even think of one. I'm just not that interested.

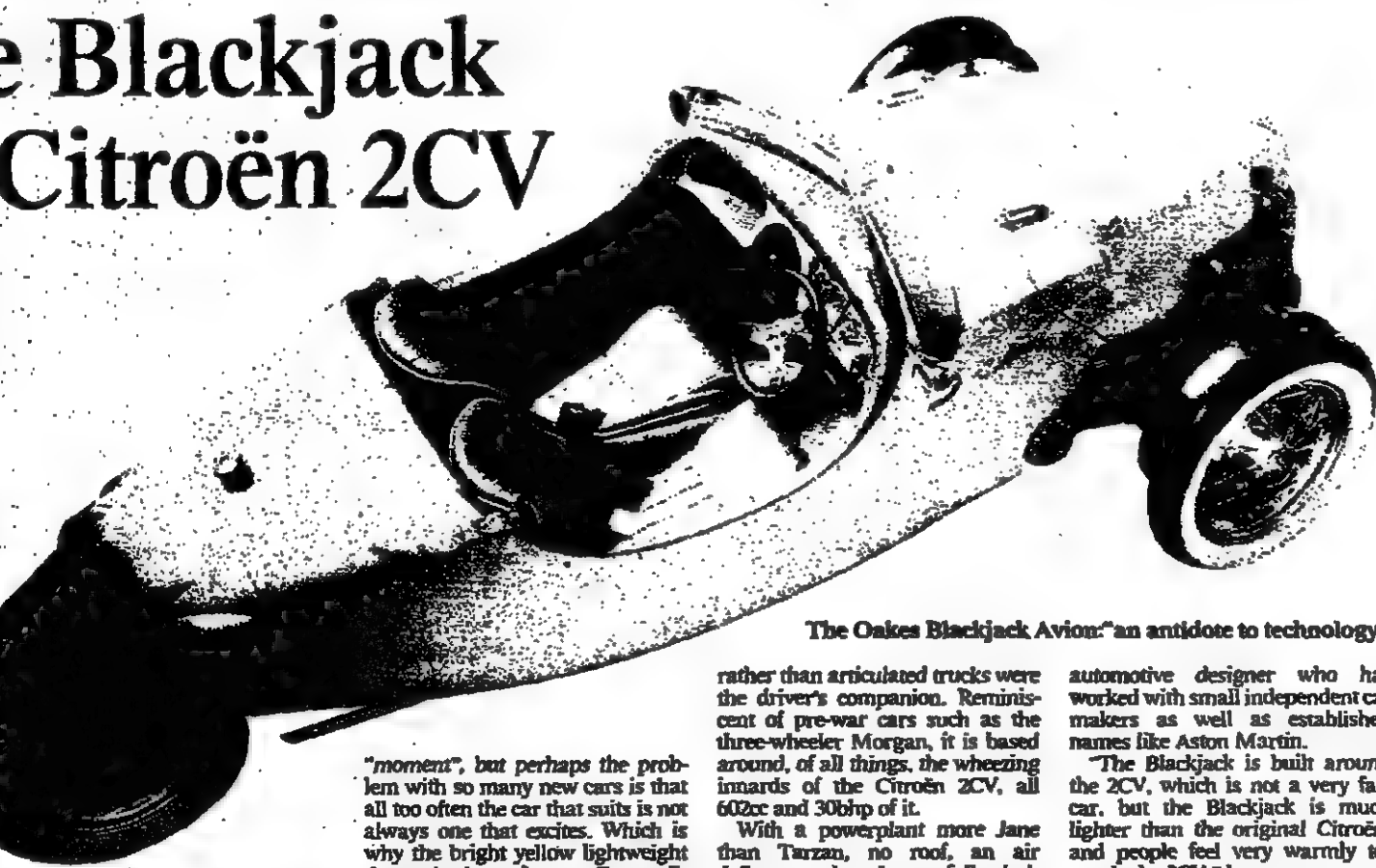
An ace Blackjack from a Citroën 2CV

Continued from page 1 and run out of money without any promise of winning, a drive in someone else's car at the end of it all, or cut the lessons short and instead build his own single-seater to practise in.

"I had about £1,300 to spare when I started," he says. "I spent £450 on a 2.3-litre Granada Estate." The bills mounted though, as £500 went on building the steel chassis and aluminium body panels, and £1,700 on "bits and pieces". The only part of the car Thompson could not make was the roll frame which had to be made to race specification.

The Thompson Special will reach a top 124mph, and has a 0-60mph time of well under six seconds, depending on gearing. Thompson says: "It has a four speed gearbox, and to change the gearing I use bigger rear wheels on racing circuits for a higher top speed, and smaller rear wheels on hill climbs to improve the acceleration."

If the car is fun on the road, it is positively exhilarating on the track. "I have driven it a number of times at Goodwood, and had my trickiest moment just after I had put in the 2.8-litre engine. I was going through the curve where Stirling



The Oakes Blackjack Avion: "an antidote to technology"

Moss had his big accident and I was doing about 115mph when suddenly the back started to weave around. When you lose control at 115mph for the first time, I can tell you it is quite exhilarating. We might not be thrilled by such a

"moment", but perhaps the problem with so many new cars is that all too often the car that suits is not always one that excites. Which is why the bright yellow lightweight three-wheeler from Cornwall-based car designer Richard Oakes, stirs such interest. It does not have to be speed that thrills.

The Oakes Blackjack Avion cycle-car harks back in looks to the days of winding, empty country lanes, when hedges and haywains

rather than articulated trucks were the driver's companion. Reminiscent of pre-war cars such as the three-wheeler Morgan, it is based around, of all things, the wheezing innards of the Citroën 2CV, all 602cc and 30bhp of it.

With a powerplant more Jane than Tarzan, no roof, an air deflector rather than a full windscreen, three wheels instead of four, and room only for two, the Blackjack is a long way from the cosseted modern saloon.

Richard Oakes, who studied at the Royal College of Art and worked for Ford, is an independent

automotive designer who has worked with small independent car makers as well as established names like Aston Martin.

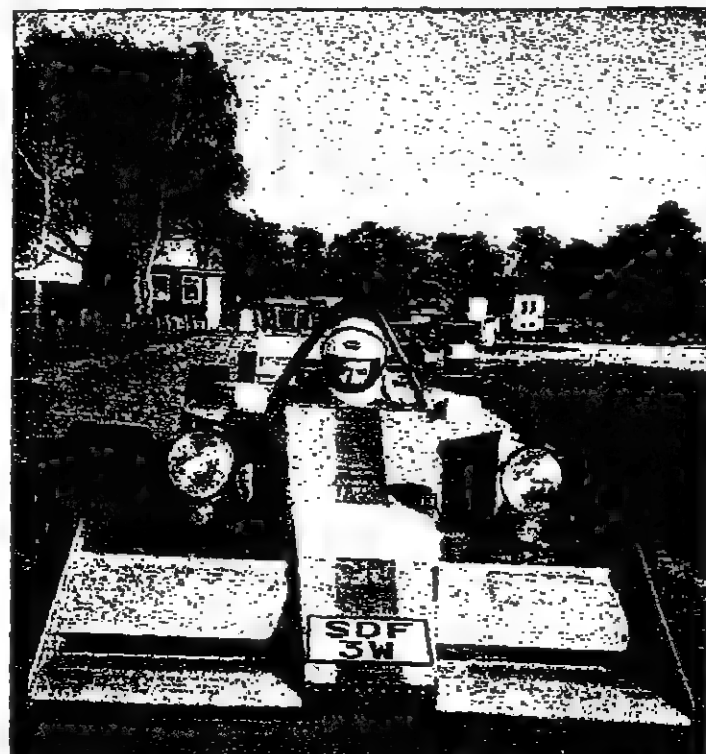
"The Blackjack is built around the 2CV, which is not a very fast car. It is a 'country lane' car, a low-tech alternative for people looking for an antidote to technology. It rips along, it works very well, is quite charming, and quality engineering has gone into it."

Oakes believes that interest in such cars stems from the need to find meaning in life. "I am nearly 50 years old, and 20 years ago would have classed myself as a car nut. Then at least the roads were full of interesting cars. Today, those cars that are interesting are either very expensive, or are older cars and bring with them all the problems of restoration."

The Blackjack is his alternative. Customers need to find a donor 2CV — an MOT failure, which can be bought for as little as £100, is fine, as the chassis is not needed. The engine, steering, brakes and front suspension are the key elements.

These are married to the Blackjack Avion kit, available from the most basic £875 pack, right up to the luxury £4,500 package which includes everything from subframes and moulded bodywork to handbuilt steel wheels and hand-stitched leather interior.

Oakes says: "Building one requires no specialist knowledge of wiring or of welding. People want different things, but we calculate it should take only three or four weekends to put a car together."



Thompson in his Special: fun on the road, exhilarating on the track

FIFTY YEARS OF MAKING KIT CARS

● THE KIT car is deemed by enthusiasts to be 50 years old this year, half as old as the motor car itself. In 1947, Derek Buckler took the first steps in making his own car by making a space frame chassis and began production a year or so later.

● ABOUT 5,000 kit cars, worth on average £5,000 to £6,000 each, are now made in Britain every year, of which 20 per cent are exported.

● PROBABLY the most famous and widely sold kit car was the Lotus 7. Created by the company's founder, Colin Chapman, in 1957, it has been produced in one form or another ever since. The manufacturing rights are now held by Caterham, who sponsor race series for the car in five countries.

● ONE main exporter is the Lomax Motor Company based in Halesowen, West Midlands,

which sells 15 to 20 of its three-wheeler kit cars abroad every month. The models, costing £3,000-£5,000, are popular in France, Belgium and Holland.

● THE Association of Specialist Car Manufacturers is an umbrella organisation of some of the main kit car-makers. For more information, contact association members Mark Woolbridge on 01384 834422 or Peter Bailey on 01308 897072.

● WHICH KIT? magazine can be contacted on 01737 22030.

● THE NEW safety checks for kit and amateur-built cars will be "far more rigorous than an MOT", according to the Department of Transport.

● ABOUT 150 companies make kit cars in Britain, but only 60 or so produce more than 20 cars a year from dedicated premises and only four or five make over 150 cars a year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Europe gears up

CAR SALES increased in every country in Western Europe in 1996, according to provisional figures. The biggest increases were in two of the smallest countries — Norway, up 38 per cent, and Ireland, up 32 per cent. The average increase was 6.6 per cent. The smallest increases were in Italy, just 0.3 per cent, Switzerland, up 2.5 per cent, and Britain, where sales of 2,025,500 represented a 4.1 per cent gain.

Through a glass darkly

DRIVERS who don't wear their glasses behind the wheel either through vanity or forgetfulness could put other road users at risk, says the AA. A study of 6,000 motorists found that of those needing glasses only 16 per cent of men wore them compared to 23 per cent of women. It is estimated that one in four drivers need glasses. "Sharp vision is essential to road safety, particularly during winter when poor weather and low light can lead to eye strain," said Andrew Howard, AA head of road safety.

Multi-coloured Lexus

CUSTOMERS for Lexus, the luxury cars made by Toyota, have persuaded the company to change its policy on colours and trim. They can now have any combination of exterior and interior colour rather than the limited choices previously on offer. The company says cars will be built to individual order. The most popular exterior colours in 1996 were Aspen Green and Cashmere Gold.

Marcos I up for sale

THE FIRST Marcos ever built, commissioned in 1959 for Jackie Stewart, is to be sold by Brooks at its sale of collectors' cars and automobiles at London's Olympia on February 22. It was restored by the company's founder, Jem Marsh, in 1976 and raced successfully in historic events for many years.

AA backs MP on bull bars

BULL BARS should be banned, said the AA as it gave a welcome to the Ten Minute rule Bill to outlaw the notorious accessories for off-roads, introduced by Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, in the Commons on Tuesday. Latest figures from the Transport Research Laboratory suggest that estimates of deaths due to bull bars have been overstated in the past and they can only be blamed with certainty for about three fatalities and 40 injuries a year. "That's still three deaths too many," said the AA.

Volvo raises the roof

THE FIRST open-top Volvo for 40 years was unveiled at the Detroit Motor Show this month, a convertible version of the C70 Coupé, which will star in the new Saint film. It will be powered by a turbocharged 5-cylinder engine and the chassis has been developed with the help of TWR, who run Volvo's touring car race team.



Volvo's new C70 Coupé: a Saintly conversion after 40 years

Helen Mound learns some tricks of the trade from a company that offers any colour — and 500 shades of black

The complex art of painting your wagon



Colour me incompetent: Helen Mound, in compulsory full protective gear, starts on her ill-advised freehand attempt to reproduce Car 97 with stencil plastic and spray paint...

Take me to your leader. I wish to learn to flip-flop. Then I will fade in, blend and fade out. Once I've mastered this, I'll try a full edge-to-edge respray.

PPG Industries, the largest car paint producer in the world, is accustomed to this curious request. It runs one of Britain's leading car painting schools, and flip-flop paint, fading, blending and edge-to-edge spraying are four of the techniques it teaches to car dealers' and garage bodyshops' paint technicians.

I might look like something from outer space in the full protective gear, which includes breathing equipment, but inside the PPG Auto Refinish Training Centre in Birmingham everyone dresses like this. The fumes alone could overpower you in the spray booth, and smoking or using a mobile phone is forbidden within 100 yards of the centre for fear of an explosion.

Most people think that car paint is black and white — plus a few other colours — but the technology has become so complex that the Refinish Centre provides 52 different courses, covering subjects from warranty repair to specialist techniques such as fade-in (where one colour blends to another without an obvious join).

Otherwise known as Pittsburgh Plate Glass, PPG Industries has been around for more than a century. Having started in plate glass in 1883 in the United States, it swiftly added automotive paints to its manufacturing abilities when the car industry took off 100 years ago. Today annual sales exceed \$7 billion (£4.2 billion) and all the world's major car producers use the company's automotive coatings technology, including Ford, Toyota, Rover, Fiat, Nissan, Saab, BMW and Daewoo.

The trains on London's Underground are finished in PPG's graffiti-resistant paint, and when the Shuttle was pulled out from the Channel tunnel after the fire last year, PPG's heat-resistant paint was still intact while everything else was singed.

But PPG's main business is in the automotive industry and it has developed a close link between original paints for car factories and refinishing products for bodyshops. The company understands the problems involved in paint repairs outside a factory environment, reproducing complicated colours in bodyshops and repairing complex finishes, which is why it opened the Refinish Training Centre.

The man in charge of the operation is Bob Magee, otherwise known as the Pearly King "for the colours I can



... only to be told by Bob Magee, left, that "letters and figures are the hardest to reproduce and should only really be tackled after a lot of practice"

create with pearl paints that most people think are impossible.

Magee has been in car paints for 30 years, and knows how to make a new car design look its best using colour and how to get the best colours out of new paint technology. When the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders commissioned its "Concept Car 2096" for last year's Motor Show, Magee was asked to "finish it in something that didn't look like paint".

With the help of three other paint technicians, he completed the task in three days. The result was a glass-looking finish hailed by the industry as an impressive success.

Mixing paints and experimenting with colours is Magee's favourite part of his job, and he spent a day teaching me the tricks of the trade.

Paints currently fall into four basic categories: metallics (using flecks of aluminium that can vary in size and colour); micas (also known as

pearls, using transparent spheres that vary in size and colour); lenticulars (similar to micas, but the particles are oval-shaped to create greater reflections, which result in brighter colours); and good old-fashioned flats (that benefit from ever-improving pigments to produce brighter yellows and reds).

Flip-flop — also known as "three-stage pearls" — is a name for a technique using mica paints. First a basic colour is applied, then a mica to provide a pearlescent effect, and then a coloured glaze. The flip is the light effect and the flop is the shade or colour. More mica gives more flip, more colour gives more flop. Simple, when you know how.

No paint is financially viable unless the desired result can be achieved in two or three coats. My own creation would prove costly on the production

line. With a mix of sunburst orange, flame red and light yellow pearl, I'd made a paint that looked absolutely wonderful in the tin, but provided very little coverage and needed to be applied to my door panel six times before it would work.

Magee advised that to get the finished result I should have applied a coat of orange first for good coverage, then my colour for the effect and, finally, glaze to increase the pearl look. Years of experience have taught him how to identify the paint needed to flatter the lines of a car. He tells me how my pearlescent paint would look dull on a Rover Metro, but bright if applied to a Volkswagen Beetle because of its curved shape.

The practical side of my day's course was fun, but difficult. A steady hand is

needed to apply the paint evenly with a spray gun 6ins from the door panel, which I didn't find a problem. But it all went horribly wrong when I attempted some freehand work. I'm clearly not a natural with a spray gun, so I went for what I thought was the simple approach, cutting the figures "Car 97" out of some stencil plastic.

Somewhat I don't think it will make it as this year's logo. Magee pointed out, after I'd spent two painstaking hours painting the stencil, that "letters and figures are the hardest to reproduce and should only really be tackled after a lot of practice".

The centre trains 900 students a year from paint distributors, car dealerships and bodyshops. Courses cost £100 a day. And if you still think that car paint technology is all black and white, consider the fact that PPG now has 500 different versions of black on its palette.

The fumes alone could overpower you in the booth

YOUR CAR'S COLOUR CAN FADE

Out of fashion and in the red

Buying a car in a trendy colour could be expensive. You might love the popular greens, sparkling yellows or violent purples now, but don't be fooled into thinking they will always be appealing, writes Helen Mound.

Manufacturers are striving to offer ever more attractive colours, but customers are discovering that choosing the wrong one can be a costly mistake. Dealers say that motorists looking for trade-ins on their cars in fashionable colours usually get lower deals. An Apricot Volkswagen Polo or Exploit Yellow Fiat Punto can lose as much as £400 compared to the second-hand prices of more sober-coloured models.

Executives who pick Turquoise for their Jaguar XJR are likely to be penalised by a trade-in £1,000 less than those with dark metallic paintwork. A BMW in a non-metallic colour can lose between £300 and £400 in value, and Land Rovers in anything other than dark blues and earthy metallics can depreciate as much as an extra £1,000. One dealer would even avoid taking a Range Rover in Sahara Desert (bright metallic gold) as a trade-in. Despite being only a year since Land Rover dropped the

colour from its range, he felt it would be hard to sell.

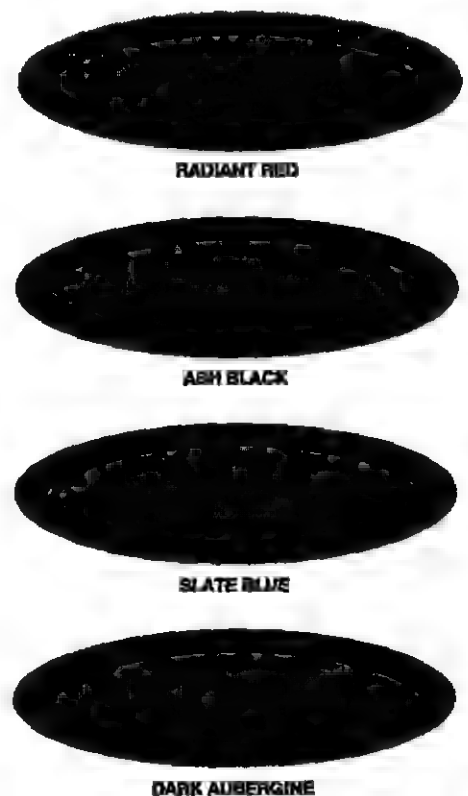
Garish colours are usually used to boost interest in slow sellers and new models. When Hyundai launched the Accent in the UK, it was offered in Scarlet Red (a vivid pink), but two years later Accents in that colour suffer greater depreciation than the more subtle shades.

Experts advise picking the colour that suits the car. Metallic blues or dark greens are considered appropriate for a BMW, metallic silver or blue for a Mercedes-Benz and Audi, and second-hand Ford Mondeo should preferably be in blue or red.

The current colour trend for mass-produced models is metallic blues, dark greens, burgundies and silvers. If you must pick a flat colour, red is the best seller, followed by blue.

Clearly the most cost-effective option you can pick for your new car is metallic paint, its positive effect on second-hand prices far outweighing that of options such as airbags and anti-lock brakes. Most manufacturers charge between £200 and £300 for metallic paint on a new car, but a second-hand car in metallic paint can fetch £500 more than an identical model in a flat colour.

SOME SHADES TO BE SEEN IN



■ Ten cars and their best colours: Alfa Romeo Spider — Alfa Red, Proteo Red; Audi A4 — Aluminium Silver, Emerald Green; Ford Mondeo — Slate Blue, Nouveau Red; Jaguar XJ6 — Ice Blue, Sherwood Green; Land Rover Discovery — Niagara Green, Epsom Green; Mazda MX-5 — Classic Red, British Racing Green; Mercedes C-Class — Brilliant Silver, Azurite Blue; Porsche 911 — Midnight Blue, Polar Silver; Rover 200 — Nightfire Red, British Racing Green; Volkswagen Polo — Dragon Green, Diamond Black.

■ Ten colours that lose money: Ford Probe — Applemint; Volkswagen Polo — Apricot; Ford Mondeo — Si Citrine Yellow; Fiat Punto — Exploit Yellow; Seat Ibiza/Cordoba — Kiwi Yellow; Nissan Primera — Linden Green; Vauxhall Calibra — Pineapple Yellow; Range Rover — Sahara Desert; Hyundai Accent — Scarlet Red; Jaguar XJR — Turquoise.

A study in scarlet vision

DR DASHBOARD

Q My husband and I are about to change our car and I know we will end up having the same old argument about its colour.

A Well, it is usually imprudent to interfere between husband and wife... is there a serious point here?

Q My husband is a bit of a fuddy-duddy and, like Henry Ford, thinks I should be happy with every colour available as long as it is black. I would like a cheerful red for a change. Isn't black harder to see on the road?

A Actually, anecdotal evidence suggests that green cars are involved in more accidents than those of any other colour. But black is unlucky when it comes to theft.

Q Really? You see, my husband is not as young as he was and I was more worried that he would not be seen as clearly as he might. I didn't realise that colour could affect that.

A It appears so. The chance of having your car stolen or broken into is 30 per

cent greater if it is black, according to a survey by Admiral insurance. But that doesn't mean red is best for deterring the villains. Based on a survey of 10,000 claims, the findings showed that gold, yellow or brown cars are far less popular with thieves than other colours.

Q I still want to go for red, as long as it is not a magnet for joy-riders or anything like that.

A Admiral's marketing manager, Kate Armstrong says: "We had expected red to attract joy-riders, so were surprised to see it was less risky than black."

Q So what about red being more easily seen? Any evidence to show that bright colours are safer?

A What seems to be more important is how good your husband's eyesight is. The British Safety Council's research shows that one in 14 older drivers have difficulty reading traffic signs.

SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

CAR 97

7

CARMART 1: ROAD TEST SPECIAL ON VAUXHALL'S DESIGNS TO MATCH YOUR LIFESTYLE

Dramatic change to the estate we're in

Alan Copps finds a thoughtful challenge aimed at some excellent opposition

Some cars are better as estates than they are as saloons. They have to be because where once the "load lugger" was simply a variation of a basic model for people who needed more space, in the modern world of niche marketing the estate faces a tough struggle against the multi-seated people mover and the versatile off-roader.

The estate as a "driver's car" offering performance to satisfy the enthusiast as well as space to carry a wardrobe is a relatively new concept, helped along by Volvo's success with estates in touring car racing and the sexy image of things such as the BMW Touring. In its top-of-the-range Vectra SRI estate with its lively 2-litre engine, Vauxhall has not only brought the idea to a more affordable part of the market but wrought a great improvement in the car itself.

ROADTEST 1

saloon version. But in these things, no matter how deep the marketing men delve into their dictionaries of superlatives, the driver's impression is a great deal more significant than any measurements.

More importantly, especially for passengers, the estate features a new multi-link rear suspension mounted on a subframe completely separate from the main structure of the car and is insulated from it by four large bushes. This matches the arrangement at the front end, where engine, front suspension and steering also have their own subframe. One aim of this change, together with improved noise damping, was to reduce the amount of "booming" and vibration which so often reverberates through the wide open spaces of an estate car. But with the sophisticated linkage of the suspension what it also does is to immeasurably improve ride and comfort.

In the past few years, the medium sector of the market, the mainstay of the company car driver, has seen an extraordinarily good series of models emerge from major manufacturers.

Ford's Mondeo, much trumpeted as the "world car", led the way. The highly-praised Peugeot 406 upped the ante and the Vectra showed just how hard the giants of the business were trying in this sector. The Vectra is certainly a good car, but its most direct competitors are excellent. As a hatchback or saloon it doesn't quite match the dynamics of the other two, its cabin feels more cramped and its ride a bit lumpy.

But in its estate version the car feels quite different, both from the driver's and the passenger's point of view. Extra space at the rear gives an impression of more space throughout. In fact, although the cabin and controls and especially the seats have been improved, physical space is the same as in the

To make sure this improvement is felt at all times, and to ensure good grip for the driven front wheels regardless of load at the rear, there is also the option of automatic self-levelling suspension which counteracts changes in handling and attitude and makes it unnecessary to adjust headlights when transporting heavy loads.

All versions come with a load cover and safety net, which although at first an irritation when looking in the rear-view mirror, has proved its worth protecting occupants in crash tests. The redesigned seats are a big step forward in comfort and the adjustable steering column makes finding a comfortable position much easier.

All this makes the SRI an unexpected pleasure to drive. The steering is precise, handling pre-



Vectra estate: not a world beater on space, but in every other respect on a par with its competition, giving immeasurably improved ride and comfort over the saloon version

Packed with extras for all occasions

ROADTEST 2

IF YOU are aged 40 or thereabouts, married, have children, and are prepared to spend that little bit extra for a more powerful engine and higher equipment levels, then Vauxhall believes its Vectra Estate is the car for you, writes Vaughan Freeman.

Despite competition from the multi-purpose people movers which in America have decimated sales in the estate car sector, and the drift towards four-wheel drive off-road cars, the humble estate is staging a sales revival.

Even Vauxhall might admit that this rise is driven as much by the carmaker's success in repackaging its estates as "must-have" life-style accessories rather than less-than-glamorous load-luggers. Estates now account for around 10 per cent of all car sales, compared to just over 7 per cent a decade

ago, and the forecast is that the total will rise to 15 per cent of the new car market by 2000.

Vauxhall, whose Luton plant is the sole source of the Vectra estate for the whole of Europe, says: "The image of the estate car as a utility vehicle has undergone a dramatic change. The former load-carrier has become a leisure vehicle for everyday use, long-distance travel, and for recreation." Which is why Vauxhall has ended a 10-year absence from the midsize estate sector.

Vauxhall's own research shows that customers for mid-size estates are attracted more by the car's looks than by its practicality. As many as a third of estate buyers say that the car's looks are the

most important to them, followed by interior space (25 per cent) and luggage capacity (15 per cent).

This is reflected in the range of Activity Pack options on offer with the estate. For the surfing enthusiast there is the lockable roof-rack plus surfboard carrier, a roof-mounted boat carrier for the maritime fan, and even a lockable roof-rack base plus ski rack for those planning to take their Vectra to the snow. Other packages include the Sportsbody Pack, the Sports Chassis Pack, the travel Pack with aerodynamically shaped roof-top Sportbox, and the Towing Pack. The Vectra estate is for drivers who take their time off very seriously indeed.

The CDX is loaded with equipment, including safety-oriented items such as anti-lock braking, traction control, air conditioning,

pollen filter, and — essential for any estate — automatic self-levelling. Cup holders are hidden by wooden panels and offer fascinating and cheap entertainment, unfolding via an incredibly complex array of hinges.

For Vauxhall, the Vectra estate's main target is the estate version of the rival Ford Mondeo, and to that end a confusing 23 versions are being offered. Why so many? Stuart Harris, Vauxhall team marketing manager, says: "We considered our customers very carefully. This means that there is a tremendous variety of models and, importantly, our customers will not have to compromise on style just because they need a larger load area."

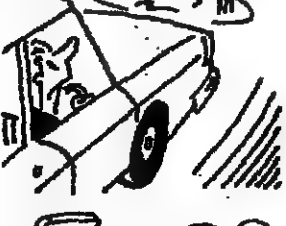
It also means Vauxhall is able to offer the Vectra estate from £13,470 up to £22,270.

CAR WASH

HE'S BEEN HERE SINCE THE SIXTIES



BETTER SLOW DOWN, RODNEY



REDUCE SPEED NOW



BETTER SLOW DOWN, RODNEY



No problems: Valerie Elliott loads in her mother's wheelchair without having to struggle over a tailgate lip

Many years ago, when Nissans were still called Datsuns and estates had wooden strips, my wife, Valerie, fell in love with a Sunny, writes Harvey Elliott.

It was, she said, the only car that enabled her to slide heavy shopping straight on to the flat platform, could carry football-muddy school-boys and yet was light to handle, small enough to manoeuvre into the tightest space and economical.

But the old reliable Datsun estate was made redundant in favour of new, bigger, more macho versions, some of which we tried without too much enthusiasm. We also tried the ubiquitous hatch-back — and came to hate the awful lip that forced anyone loading through the rear hatch and tailgate to lift heavy goods over it, far too high for their own good.

Easy rider that carries it off

ROADTEST 3

When my mother-in-law came to live in a "granny annexe" and needed to be manhandled into and out of the passenger seat and her wheelchair loaded into the back the need for another genuine estate became paramount.

Search as we could, we failed to find anything that was small, economical, comfortable and yet sturdy enough. There were huge tanks of the sort favoured by the parents of public school-boys and girls from the Home Counties. We even found the odd small estate with a tailgate without that awful lip, but in nearly every

case it seemed they were under-powered or had such water-thin bodywork that I could not feel safe driving them. Then came the Vauxhall Vectra estate.

My week's testing did not begin well. The car came in the diesel version and I feared noise, pollution and slow acceleration response. And, as I took the handbrake off, it was much too close to the centre armrest for comfort. But within minutes I was sold. The diesel, admittedly noisy at first, soon quietened

as the engine warmed up. The acceleration on the motorway was "get-out of trouble" fast and the lay-out and feel of the driving seat excellent.

But would it pass the wheelchair and shopping test? It sailed through with flying colours as the wheelchair was bundled in with hardly a murmur of protest and heavy boxes of shopping were slid effortlessly on to the wide load-bearing floor.

The fuel tank is vast and the economy astonishing. In over 500 miles both in town and on the motorways I was getting over 60mpg; the official figure is 67.3mpg at a constant 50mph.

Perhaps because of the size of the fuel tank, there is a disconcerting banging and sloshing when braking and stopping at traffic lights as the fuel washes around the tank. But no car is perfect.

VECTRA ESTATE

Engines:
Four-cylinder, 16-valve, 1.8-litre produces 115bhp at 5400rpm.
Four-cylinder 16-valve, 2-litre produces 136bhp at 5600rpm.
V6 2.5-litre produces 169bhp at 5800rpm.
Four-cylinder 2-litre, turbocharged, direct-injection diesel produces 82bhp at 4300rpm.

Transmission: Five-speed manual or four-speed automatic with fuel-saving Neutral Control. Front wheel drive.

Performance:
1.8-litre: Max speed 121mph, 0-60mph in 11.5 seconds.
Two-litre: Max speed 128mph, 0-60mph in 10 seconds.
Diesel: Max speed 105mph, 0-60mph in 16 seconds.
V6: Max speed 143mph, 0-60mph in 8.5 seconds.

Economy:
1.8-litre: Urban 23.5mpg, extra-urban 42.8mpg, combined 32.8mpg.
Two-litre: Urban 22.8mpg, extra-urban 40.9mpg, combined 31.7mpg.
Diesel: Urban 33.6mpg, extra-urban 53.3mpg, combined 44.1mpg.
V6: Urban 19.9mpg, extra-urban 34.9mpg, combined 27.4mpg.

Equipment (CDX): anti-lock braking, power steering, traction control, air conditioning, automatic self-levelling, trip computer, adjustable steering column, remote control central locking and engine immobiliser, TrafficMaster.

Prices: £13,470 to £22,270.

USED CAR BRIEF



VOLVO 850 ESTATE
In my first outing in a Volvo 850 Estate a curious London motorcycle policeman stopped me to chat about the car's good looks. The 850 embodied the Volvo style and fun to appear, without irony, in the same sentence. Launched as a saloon in 1992, the five-door estate arrived a year later. Available with 2 and 2.5-litre petrol and 2.5-litre turbodiesel engines, just-launched All Wheel Drive, and the storming 2.5-litre turbocharged petrol T5.

GOOD NEWS: Does not haul as much cargo as the bigger Volvo 700 and 900 Sedans. Still looks a mile ahead from some angles. Interior is dated, featuring the Volvo preference for angular edges rather than the more modern flowing lines favoured by rivals.

LOOK FOR: The more recent turbo-diesel, developed by Audi, gives extraordinary performance with 140bhp, though these are relatively rare and prices reflect this. Among the petrol cars the 2-litre offers probably more than enough performance for the average Volvo driver.

SAFETY: When it comes to safety big Volvos, like the classroom swot, always get top marks, scoring above average in the Department of Transport safety ratings. There is even an all-wheel-drive version for those who want extra grip in icy or wet conditions. Power steering, anti-lock brakes, and on later models an airbag, are all standard.

REPLACEMENT PARTS: Prices include VAT: 2-litre 20valve 850 16-door estate, £14,000 for a 1993 L-reg 2.5-litre SE 10valve, £18,000 for a 1994 L-reg T5 Turbo, £18,900 for a 1994 M-reg GLT 2-litre 20valve, and £19,000 for a 1994 M-reg T5 GLE.

OVERALL: Volvo even raced their 850 estate in the British Touring Car Championships, though with a fiercely updated 300bhp engine. The 850 has single-handily revolutionised the Volvo image. A fine people and load carrier, not as cathedral-like inside as the big Volvos, but capacious enough. It is solid, durable, and a good looker, especially from behind. Prices can be high from dealers, though they offer the widest choice.

Strange, but true... Alan Copps looks at some amazing medal winners in Toyota's Idea Olympics

What do Toyota engineers do in their spare time? Most of them, it seems, design and build vehicles. This confirmation of everything we know about the Japanese work ethic is celebrated every year by what the company calls its "Idea Olympics".

The results range from concepts that might make rival designers scratch their heads and say: "Why didn't we think of that?" to many creations which make the rest of us wonder how much we understand the Japanese sense of humour.

The latest competition to design creative, original and fun vehicles

Land of the driving fun

attracted 1,322 entrants from the Toyota Engineering Society, a sort of out-of-hours think-tank dedicated to proving that engineering can be fun. It's encouraged by the company to develop technical skills and exchange imaginative ideas. How many of its conclusions go into cars for the road is a closely guarded secret.

The prizes, of course, are nothing so mean as money. "They do it

purely for the honour of winning," said a Toyota official. Top award, the Grand Prize in this 21st Idea Olympics, went to the Z-Board: the ultimate skateboard, perhaps a little higher than most of us might like, but powered by a pollution-free spiral spring mechanism operated by a tilting movement. It also features four-wheel steering. Is this the answer to the problems of urban transport?

Of course, if you have a head for heights and feel the Z-Board is a little tame, then there's the Parent and Child Giraffe, which attracted a special award from the chief judge. Based on a real Toyota vehicle the device gives a relaxing tree-top view by raising the driver's seat six metres through the roof. Whoever met an engineer with his head in the clouds? An integrated umbrella provides weather

protection and the whole ensemble comes with a warning that it should not be used while the car is in motion.

Perhaps the most practical idea is the Bike Cycle, which has interchangeable engines, one for qualified adults or a smaller one for children. The Hand Boy moves along by bending its fingers through a "double four-joint mechanism" — which, according to my

calculation, makes it one joint better off than the real thing. It also comes with built-in amusement for the kids: if you're stuck in a jam it can play that old "rock, scissors, paper" game.

The QT Cart relies on a constant speed rotating roller transaxle and is operated by a single lever, while the climbing Walcar is said to mimic the movements of animals. A double front axle allows the

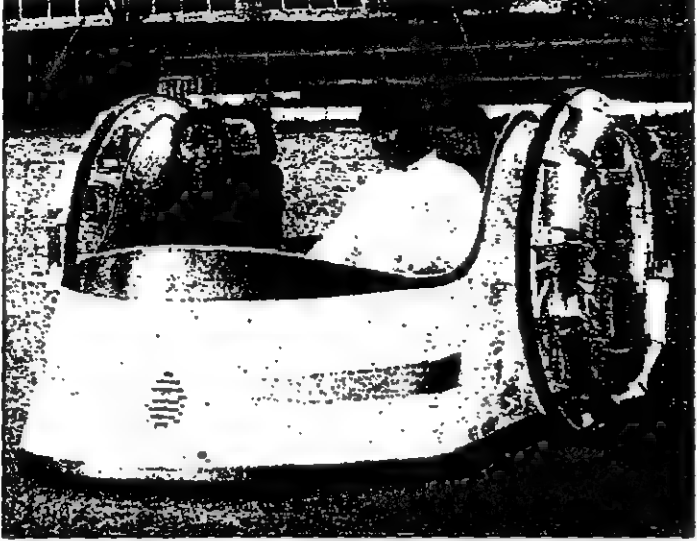
front wheels to act independently when walking or climbing, but when running it behaves just like any other four-wheel buggy.

What happens to all these wonderful vehicles after the judging is a bit of a mystery. "I think some may go into the Toyota museum. Others may be taken apart so the bits can be used in other experiments," said the lady in Toyota's press office.

But next time you read a piece here or anywhere else about how boring Japanese cars are, remember the Idea Olympics. Then see if you can detect any "Giraffe" influence in the cabin of your Carina or Corolla.



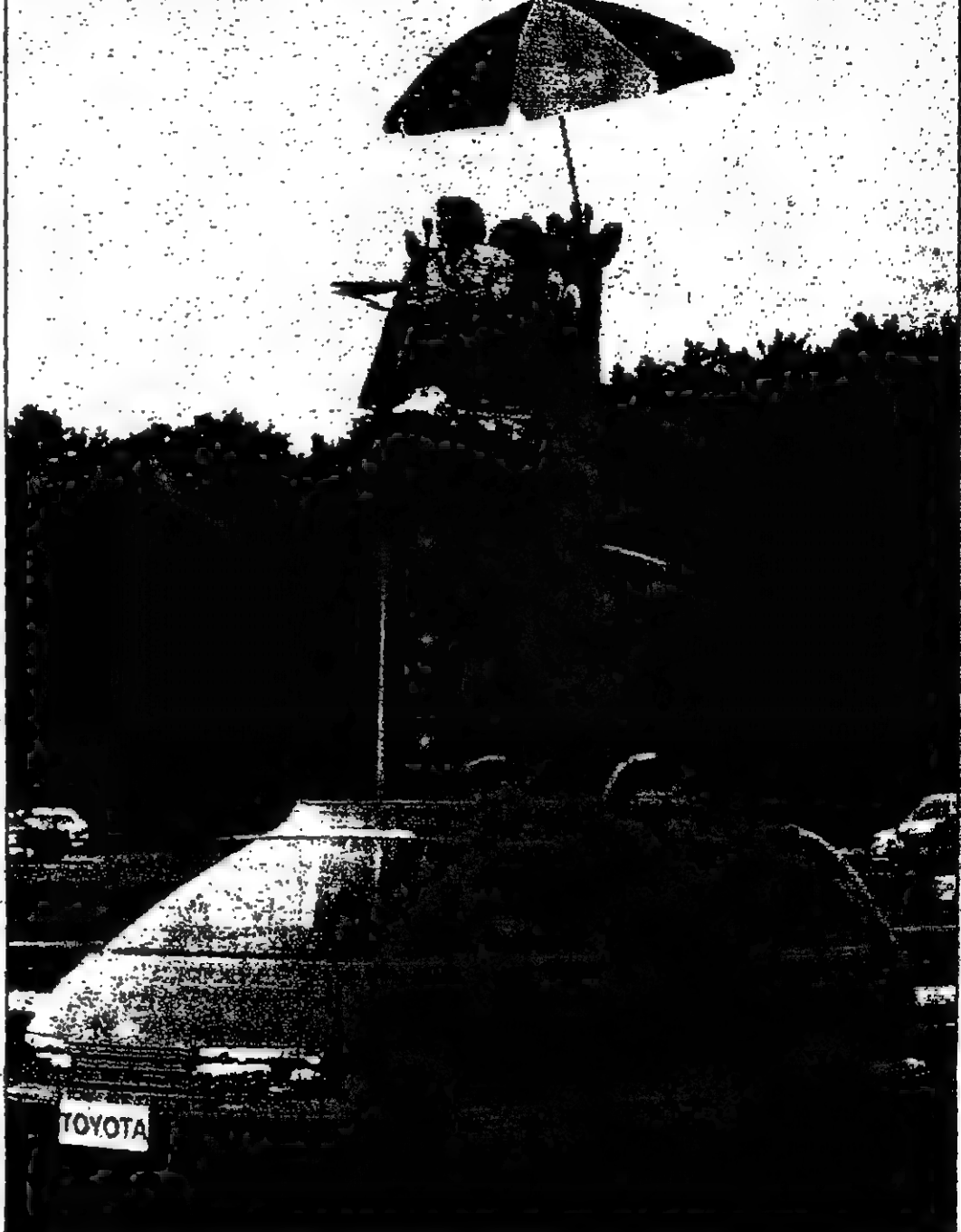
The Z-Board, powered by a pollution-free spiral spring mechanism



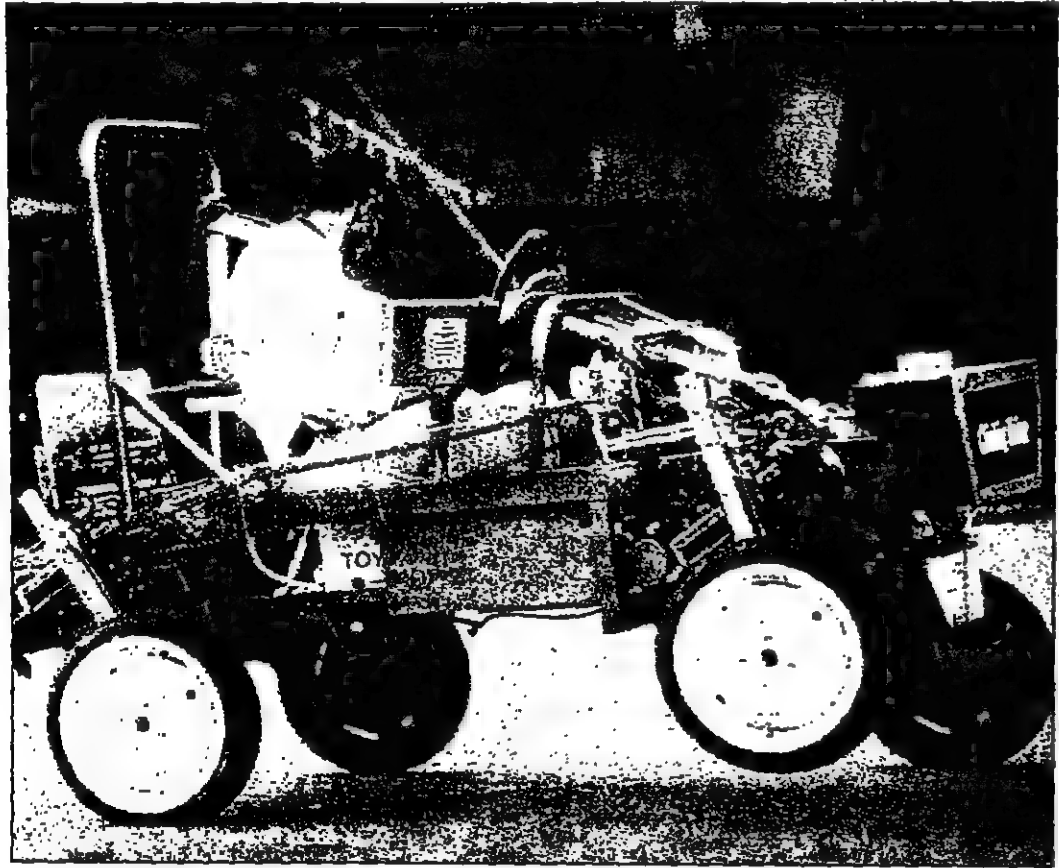
The QT Cart: constant speed rotating roller transaxle



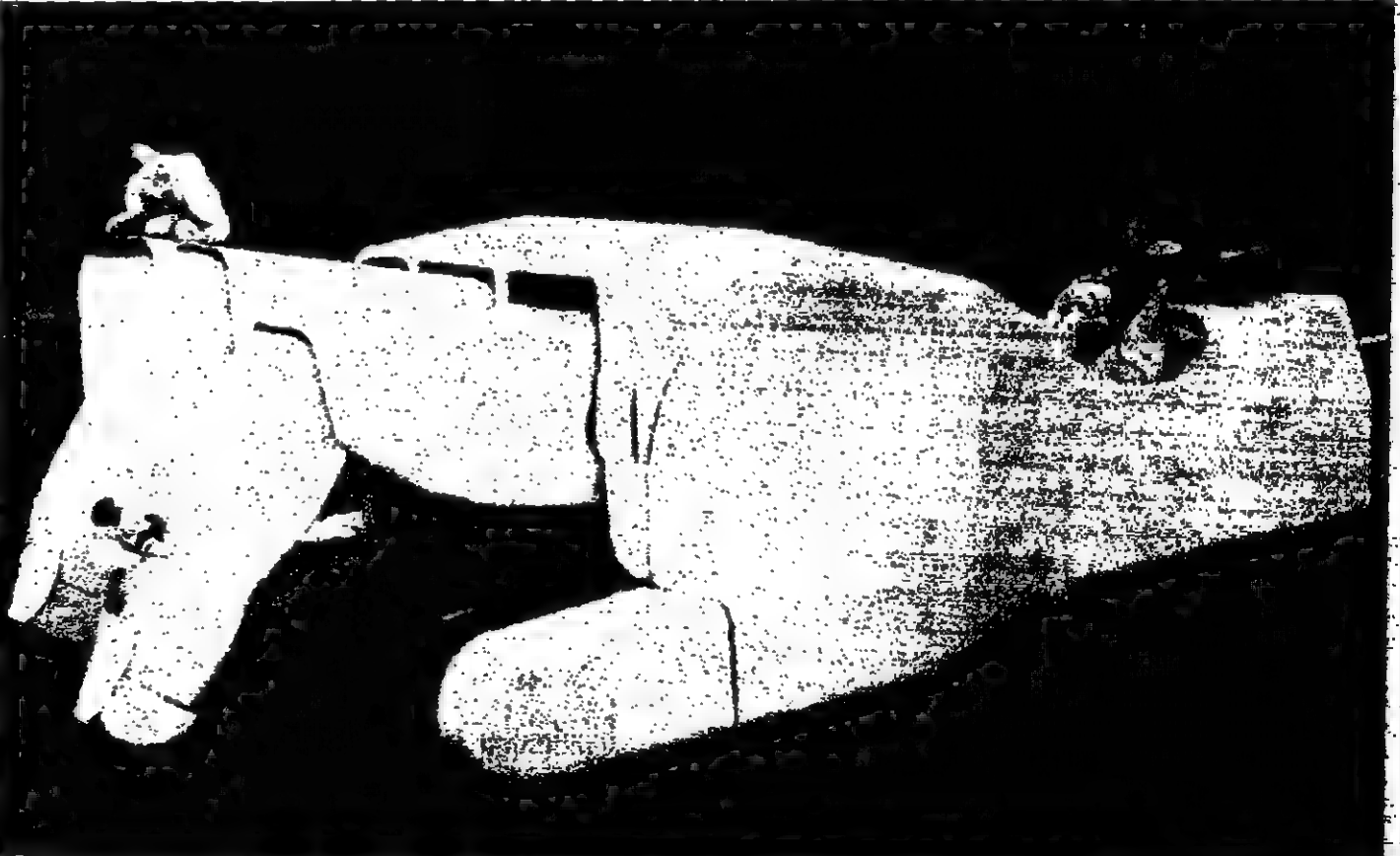
Bike Cycle: one engine for qualified adults, one for children



Parent and Child Giraffe: based on a real Toyota, with the driver six metres above the roof



The Climbing Walcar: a four-wheel buggy said to imitate the movements of animals



Hand-Boy: bends its fingers through a "double four-joint mechanism", which makes it one joint better off than the real thing

Hyundai creates a whole new concept of taking the car out for a spin

A washing machine. That's what the new Hyundai Accent MVI Coupe reminds me of. A functional and simple-to-use household item, with all its buttons and controls in the right places, doing exactly what the manufacturer says they should. Nothing offends, nothing surprises, and, despite being the sporty version of Europe's top-selling Korean car, that's about as exciting as Hyundai motoring gets.

Just as ordinary white goods look at home in the kitchen, an Accent Coupe will look fine on the drive. But if a Mercedes-Benz Coupe is the Aga of domestic garages, then this Hyundai is in the realms of a Bendix washer-dryer. A reliable household appliance you can take for granted, but not something you brag about.

Cars as white goods isn't a new idea, but it is increasingly becoming the domain of the Koreans. Hyundai and Dae-

The Accent, says Helen Mound, is on being like a washing machine — it does the job, but would you boast about it?

woo have become household names, challenging the popularity of functional and reliable Japanese cars.

There's no criticism hidden in calling these cars white goods — many people think such an approach is the future of motoring. What you lose in individuality or entertainment, you gain in reliability and practicality — which is exactly what you want from household appliances.

Daewoo dealerships bear out the feeling of cars as white goods by imitating the experience of shopping at an Argos warehouse.

Hyundai maintains a more traditional approach to selling cars, with 150 dealers in the UK, who sold nearly 11,000 Accent hatchbacks and 19,000 cars overall last year.

The Hyundai Accent MVI Coupe, which has just gone on sale — not to be confused with the sexy-looking Hyundai Coupe launched last year — is a three-door version of the five-door Accent hatchback. The MVI badge indicates the new multi-valve, four-valves per cylinder 1.5-litre engine (the other 1.5 and 1.3 engines in the range are three-valves per cylinder).

The manufacturer claims 18 per cent more cleaning power, or, sorry, more power, thanks to the extra valves. The respectable performance bears witness to that, managing a top speed of 112mph and a 0-60mph sprint time of 11.2 seconds, which makes overtaking swifter and safer.

It's a comfortable but unremarkable experience to drive

the Accent MVI. I've already forgotten what the steering was like, which means it must have been light, satisfactorily responsive and reasonably precise.

I do remember that its turning circle was tight enough to make it around a mini-roundabout with one turn — all that really matters in day-to-day driving. Similarly, the pedals did their job without causing concern — not too stiff, not too light — and the brakes hauled the car to a standstill without raising an eyebrow. The gearshift is slightly more memorable because of its long, notchy movement between each gate, but that's hardly likely to spoil your day.

The Coupe's interior is also pleasingly unobtrusive. There

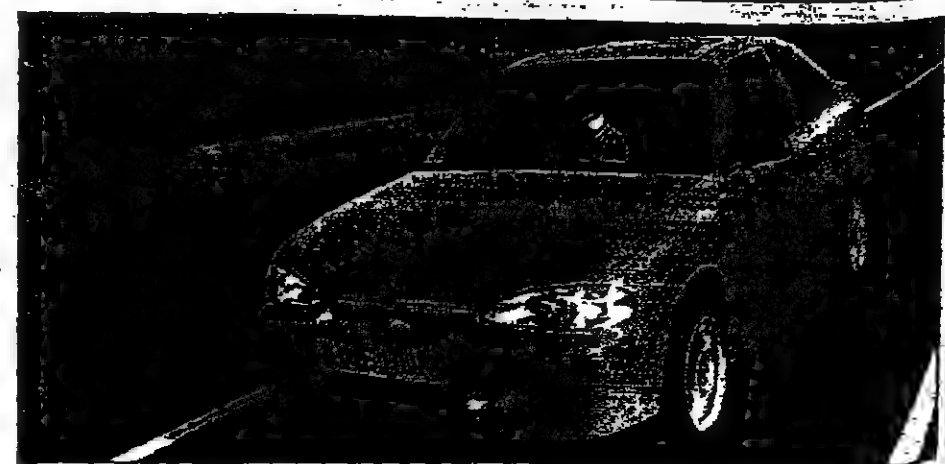
is nothing worse than an unremarkable car that tries to compensate for its lack of distinction by assaulting your eyes with a blaze of wacky seat trims and tacky colour-coded carpets and plastics. Instead, the Accent is trimmed with a little colour in its fabrics and smart but inexpensive-looking black plastics.

Outside the MVI Coupe makes its extra performance ability known with flared sills and a deeper bumper front and rear with built-in foglights. The only let down is the ten-spoke alloy wheels, which were designed to look sporty but are more successful at looking twee.

Hyundai hopes customers will include "style-conscious younger women", a wish that appears to be at least partly well founded. Prior to the launch of the Accent in 1995, Hyundai drivers were aged over 50 on average, last year the age profile dropped to 45.

HYUNDAI ACCENT 1.5 COUPE
 Engine: four-cylinder, 16-valve, 1495cc
 producing 98bhp at 5,900 rpm
 Performance: Top speed, 112mph; 0-60mph, 11.2 seconds
 Economy: Urban 26.5mpg, extra urban 42.8mpg, combined 34.9mpg

Equipment: Power steering, radio cassette stereo and four speakers, electric front windows, manual sunroof, remote tailgate and fuel filler release.
 Price: £10,567.
 Optional Extras: Metallic paint £199, mica paint £239, Air-conditioning £1,200.



Hyundai Accent MVI Coupe: what you lose in individuality, you gain in reliability

CARMART 2: DRY ICE, DISCO AND VIDEO SCREENS — BRITAIN'S FORECOURTS ARE CHANGING



With a massive choice of vehicles, supermarkets located near major motorways will offer prices for new and used cars well below traditional outlets — and buyers will not have to shop around to compare the range of what's on offer

Booming disco music, swirling white clouds of dry ice, and a full-blown mock-up of a 1950s American diner are the new face of car selling.

The GTI Centre in Huddersfield claims to be Britain's first "themed" showroom, where the emphasis is as much on making it a place to go, to enjoy, and to be seen at, as well as a place for swapping cash for wheeled metal.

The face of car showrooms and forecourts is changing as new and used car outlets big and small try new ways to woo customers. Instead of haggle and hassle, the anxiety of choosing the right car and the fear of negotiating the right deal, the man behind the GTI Centre, Paul Beswick, has invested £1.3million in taking a Disneyworld-style approach aimed at relaxing and entertaining would-be buyers.

At the other extreme, a string of up to half-a-dozen Car Supermarket megastores is set to spread across the nation, each featuring up to 2,000 second-hand cars up to four years old, with the pledge that customers will never see a salesman until they are ready to part with their cash.

As well as the 1950s diner, Beswick's GTI Centre is crammed with motoring memorabilia such as signs, petrol pumps and traffic lights. Sporting souvenirs include helmets and racing suits worn by the likes of Damon Hill, Ayrton Senna and Nigel Mansell. There is a wall of nine video screens, a blaring disco system, and a single-seat racing car hangs from the ceiling.

"I want to bring a bit more fun into the industry. I suppose, so we built a themed garage using all sorts of automotive memorabilia featuring racing themes," Bes-

Vaughan Freeman looks at the new-style showrooms

Variations on a theme of selling motors

wick says. "The car sales sector seemed to have stagnated a bit and this was my way of shaking things up."

Razzmatazz alone is not enough to sell cars, Beswick is happy to concede that the cars he sells "might not always be the cheapest, but they are guaranteed to be the best". They are backed by a complete package aimed at giving customers peace of mind, including 12 months MoT, a comprehensive warranty of up to 36 months, insurance advice, full valet and a check on whether the vehicle has been stolen or crashed in the past.

Full mechanical back-up is provided with a rolling road technical centre and workshop. Selling and tuning performance cars is just part of the deal. Beswick's GTI Centre sells everything from branded engine oil, to caps, key fobs, and leisure wear.

"We have set out to create the Number One performance car superstore, and to make it fun," Beswick says. "There are no suits, and no ties. Everything is very relaxed so that customers are not intimidated."

"We could have built a smaller unit, and filled it with GTIs, laid the forecourt with tarmac and just sold cars. We decided to do something a bit different and more interesting, more like a nightclub."

The next stage is to use the Centre as a host venue where performance car enthusiasts

can congregate every fortnight to show off their cars, swap stories, and enjoy a meal. It is hoped that first to take advantage of the Centre's "Show Off Cruises" will be the VW Owners Club in February.

The Car Supermarket in Cannock, Staffordshire, takes a very different approach. Last year the six-acre site sold an extraordinary 20,000 vehicles, and is now being expanded to 12 acres. A similar-sized outlet will open in Northampton in the summer, with long-term plans for up to 10 Car Supermarket megastores nationally selling around 200,000 used cars a year.

Each Supermarket will be sited within a few miles of a major motorway to make access as easy as possible, and feature everything from a cafeteria to a creche.

Car Supermarkets chief executive Peter King says that huge volumes enable his sites to sell cars up to two years old for an average £1,000 cheaper than high street showrooms, and around £4,000 cheaper than the same car might cost new.

If the scale of the operation

might seem daunting and unfriendly, public reaction says King, indicates otherwise. "Since we opened the Cannock site five years ago, all the evidence is that the car-buying public is happy to follow the hypermarket retailing trend already set by warehouse outlets on retail parks selling, for instance, computers, office goods or white goods."

Such huge outlets enable customers to see every car on their shopping list without driving from forecourt to forecourt, showroom to showroom, King says. "The Car Supermarket takes the pressure off the consumer having to shop around different forecourts, each one with only a restricted choice. The other important element is that this really does respond to consumer demand."

Customers can simply browse among the cars without being approached by a member of sales staff. Only if they see a car they like, and then actively seek out one of the 20-strong staff, do things go further.

The price on the car windscreen is the price paid, and there is no haggle. Similarly with part exchanges, the ball park offer for the customer's trade-in car is set using the independent CAP Black Book price guide via computer screen, and is finalised once the Supermarket's used car assessors have inspected the trade-in vehicle.

King says: "The impact of what we do is best indicated by the fact that we have been so successful. Out of the 3,000 people who visit our site each week, one in ten buys a car. That compares to an average conversion rate of one in 30 elsewhere in the trade."

HOW TO GET THE BEST PRICE WHEN YOU SELL

Arian Brain sells up to £45 million worth of used cars a year. On a busy day he sells 60 cars, and as many as 5,000 vehicles annually. He knows what makes a car sell while others gather dust on the forecourt.

Brain is used vehicle marketing director with Fleet Management Services which runs a fleet of 14,000 cars for customers. Each year about a third come up for sale and he must ensure they attract the best possible price.

He believes the private motorist should think more like a professional car dealer to cut the financial damage done by vehicle depreciation, the hidden menace that is the biggest cost to any motorist.

"People buy a new car to enjoy it now," he says. "They don't look three years down the line in the same way that a professional buyer would. If I were a private person buying a car, I would look at a few trends in motoring first. I would take note of the fact that in the past few years air-conditioning has become the 'in' word. In three years cars without it will be thought of as very basic models."

"Anti-lock brakes are also a must. Apart from the fact that they pay for themselves the first time they save your life, they add to the value of the car. Power steering too is important. I stand on auction floors day after day and see dealers walk up to cars, stick their arm through the window and move the steering wheel to see if it has power steering. If it doesn't, they walk away or pay less for it."

"Colour is a serious issue too. In the trade we talk of 'doom blue' — dark blues which rob a car of value. Dark green too is bad news. Bright red is still well received, and there are new colours now like bright green metallics which could be very, very sought after in three years."

"If I was a private buyer looking for an executive car I would go nowhere near one with a pudding stick — a manual. Such cars must have automatic transmission or they will not sell second-hand."

"Whatever car you buy, get an alarm and immobiliser. If the car doesn't come with one, get it fitted the day after you take delivery."

Having bought the car, how you drive it and look after it, will make a huge difference on its used value says Brain. Before you even get in he says, fit floor mats: "Tread on a car's carpets just once and you have knackered them and they will never look the same. Never smoke in the car either, he says. The near-parasoid anti-smoking lever means that a car that smells of cigarette smoke — a smell that can never be got rid of — will be worth a lot less than a non-smoker's car."

Caring for the car is vital too: "I cannot stress enough the value of a fully stamped service history book. I sell thousands of cars a year, and make sure every one has a full service history which gives comfort and confidence to the person who buys it. It also makes it easier for the buyer to get finance on the car since firms are happier arranging finance on a car with a full service history."

Tending to little bumps and car park scrapes the day they happen, and replacing wheel trims as soon as they are lost, are also key elements, he says. "Once a car starts to look a little bit tired, people lose respect for it and are not so careful with it."

When selling, the car must be pristine. Buyers know that a dirty car is either unloved or that the dirt is hiding paint blemishes or accident damage and will bid accordingly. For a dealer, buying a dirty car means he will have to spend time and money getting it ready for resale.

"When you come to sell, clean the car like there's no tomorrow," Brain says. "We talk about cleaning money into a car, and it's perfectly true."

Are there features that will actively deter would-be buyers? John Highfield, marketing director of the Car Shop which advertises used cars on interactive TV and the Internet, says: "Consumers who are buying with a view to sell should also consider what can turn a used car buyer off. Cars with: boy racer stripes, sporty features such as an attached spoiler, and ostentatious colours all turn peoples' heads away from the car."

Consider what can turn a used car buyer off

Priceless source

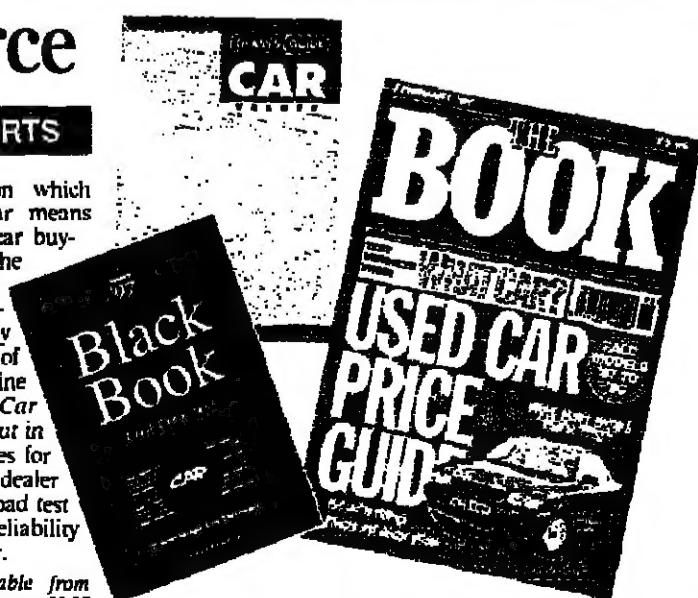
■ NEW CAR sales in 1997 are likely to exceed 2.1 million, the third highest on record, according to *Glass's Guide*, one of two pocket-sized volumes which the men in the motor trade refer to when they quote the "book value" of a used car.

The best year for new car sales in Britain was 1989 when 2,300,944 were sold. The following year sales reached 2,215,574. While such figures are made public, the real information in *Glass's* and its rival, the *CAP Black Book*, is closely guarded by the trade. The books give guide prices for all used cars, detailing minor changes and variations by the month. But

SPARE PARTS

a new publication which appeared last year means that second-hand car buyers can go into the market armed with similar information. Produced by the publishers of *What Car?* magazine, *The Book, Used Car Price Guide*, sets out in the same way prices for both private and dealer sales. It also has road test information and reliability ratings for each car.

The Book is available from newsagents and bookstores £2.95 monthly.



Capping the Glass: the Book of facts for all drivers

Carlton athletic

PROOF of the strength of the Vauxhall Carlton (1982-1993) came when it was chosen by the police to cover massive mileages, many at high speed, round-the-clock as a motorway patrol car, reports *CAP Black Book*, making it a robust buy used.

The straightforward mechanics of the car are a huge plus, as this keeps maintenance costs low. For the DIY motorist who likes to tinker, the Carlton is accessible and not too hi-tech, Vaughan Freeman writes.

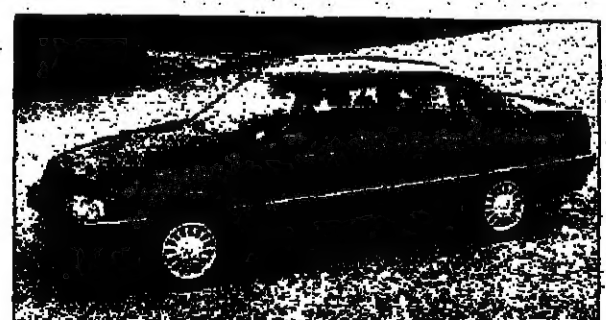
A downside is its image. Caravanners soon cottoned on to its huge towing power and carrying ability, and for all its tough and robust

FORECOURT

strengths, the Carlton has always been considered relatively unrefined.

Best deal is the 2.0i CDX auto estate. Expect to pay around £6,000 for a 1990 H-reg with average mileage. The Carlton is a big car, so avoid the underpowered 1.8-litre automatics, and any car that has had a hammering in a previous life as a taxi. Watch out for oil leaks, noisy camshafts and whining power steering pumps.

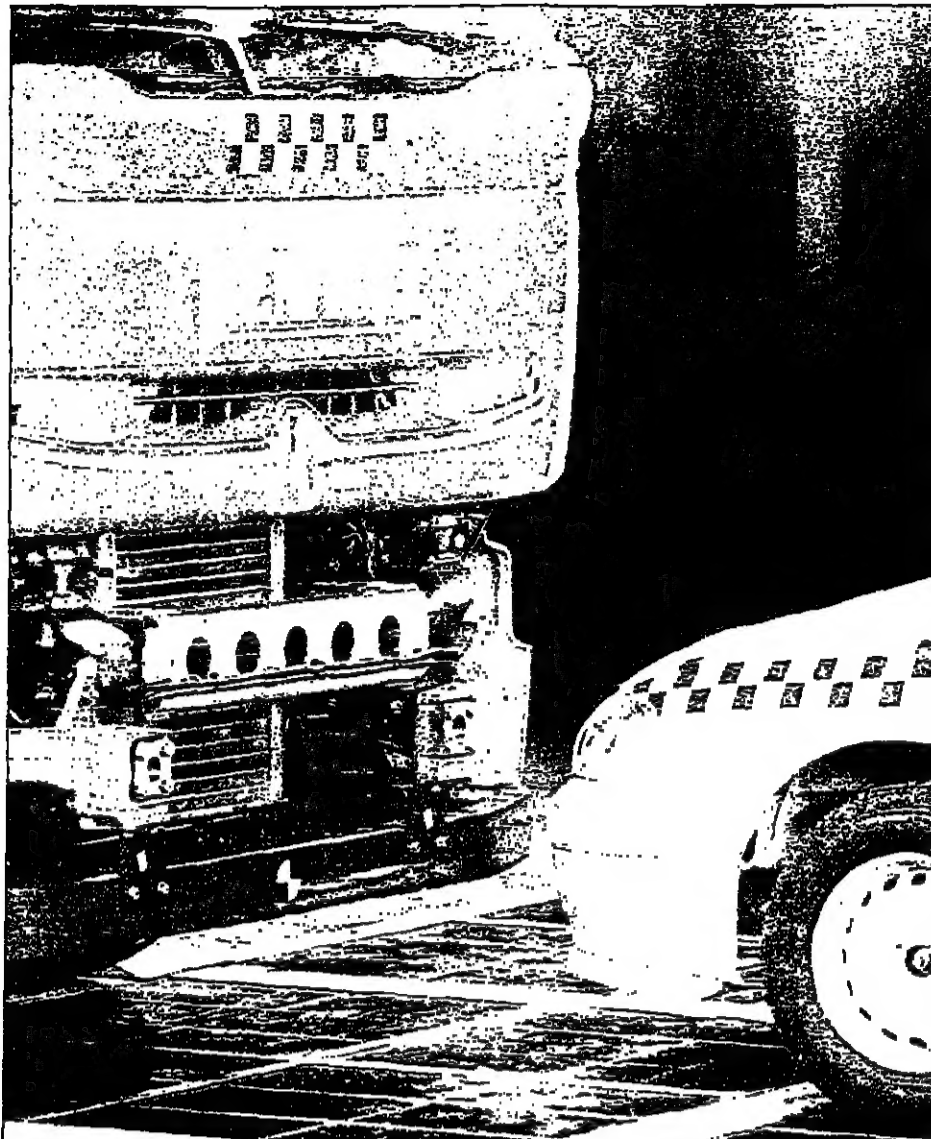
The Seat Ibiza (1987-92) is also practical and simple to maintain, inexpensive to buy and handsome. Unfortu-



Carlton: relatively unrefined, but easy to maintain

nately it is also flimsily-built, has poor used values and a whacky dashboard. The Ibiza is not liked in the trade because of its poor build quality, so trade-in prices for owners who are selling can be very depressing. Avoid any examples that are not in absolutely perfect condition, and that lack a full service history. Best buy is the 1.5 GLX five door. Expect to pay around £3,000 for a 1992 K-reg car with average miles, and best to get an AA or RAC engineer's inspection to ensure the car is sound before handing over any money.

'The truck weighed 16 tons; the collision was head-on; the Megane's passengers survived'



When the Megane was hurled at 40mph straight at the front of Renault Premium truck...

BRAKE POINT

■ THE impetus to make safety rather than performance the main selling point for modern vehicles continues at Mercedes-Benz, which has developed a "brake assist" system to radically reduce stopping distances in an emergency.

■ The Advanced Brake Assist System has been shown to cut the braking distance of a car travelling on a dry road at 62mph from 239ft to just 131ft. It is being introduced at no extra cost on Mercedes cars.

■ Engineers found that, even in an emergency, drivers do not exert maximum braking pressure and that in an accident 99 per cent are either too light on the brakes or only apply full braking pressure too late.

■ Brake Assist's electronic sensors constantly monitor the speed at which the brake pedal is applied. The system's computer brain learns the driver's normal brake pedal reactions.

■ When the pedal is applied much faster than usual, the system registers this as an emergency and overrides the driver's braking foot via a pedal booster to exert 100 per cent brake pressure in a fraction of a second.



...the sickening impact turned the stomach to water. But the car did not become fatally trapped under the truck's bumper

Smashing head-on into a 16-ton truck must rate pretty high up every car driver's list of worst motoring nightmares, a seemingly sure route to automotive oblivion. Across Europe every year almost 2,000 people die in such one-sided accidents, writes Vaughan Freeman.

While the idea of such a smash might appeal to fans of the controversial J.G. Ballard novel and movie *Crash*, to those of us with less blunted

sensibilities, watching the real thing "in the metal" comes as a shocking blow to all the senses. Even when the accident is a life-size laboratory experiment, the doomed family of three a trio of computer-linked crash dummies, and the "road" the Renault heavy commercial vehicle testing centre near Paris, the impact is no less phenomenal.

Watched by cameras capable of taking 1,000 pictures a second, a 1.2-ton Renault Megane family saloon with

"mummy" and "daddy" dummies each worth £40,000 on board, plus "baby" dummy in the rear child seat, was fired at 40mph head on into a partially-loaded rigid-bodied Renault Premium truck weighing a total of 16 tons.

The noise is shattering, a massive bang and that sickening screech of metal being instantaneously reshaped that turns the stomach to water.

While the truck was eased backwards two or three feet on impact, its left-hand headlamp

destroyed and bumper twisted, the whole rear end of the Megane flew up into the air. Then the entire car leapt up sideways and back, the front completely destroyed.

Only a few years ago such a collision would have meant certain death for everybody in the saloon. Yet computer readings of the stresses and strains suffered by the car's three occupants showed that not only would they have lived, but would have survived relatively unscathed.

Their survival was due to a combination of Megane's programmed restraint systems, including airbags and seat pretensioners, as well as the car's ability to collapse and deform on impact, so progressively absorbing violent crash energy, instead of passing it on directly to the car occupants, with fatal results.

However, crucial to their survival is a technical breakthrough by Renault that the safety-conscious French firm would like to be mandatory on all heavy commercial vehicles sold across Europe and which, the company says, could save close to 600 lives a year.

The problem with head-on collisions between trucks and cars is three-fold. First, the truck can be up to 50 times heavier than a saloon and on impact that massive energy must be absorbed and dissipated. Not much can be done about that, other than making 16-ton family saloons to help them punch their weight. But the two other key elements in such collisions can be addressed, says Renault. By making the front of trucks deformable, rather than a metal wall on wheels, so that it absorbs energy, and by designing trucks to prevent the lethal habit of cars "under-running" and wedging themselves beneath the front bumper of the truck, lives can be saved and lorries made more "smash friendly".

The Renault answer is the clumsily titled Front Under-run Prevention System, a beam made of high-yield strength steel which, bolted immediately under the truck's front bumper, deforms on impact and also stops the car under-running. Instead, it can bounce away.

Across Europe, some 4,200 people a year die in crashes between cars and heavy trucks, 1,900 of them in head-on collisions. A third of those could be prevented if the under-run prevention technology were to be generally adopted, says Renault.

The redesign of the front of the truck to absorb up to 20 per cent of the crash energy, and to prevent cars diving under the front of it, has measurable effects says Vehicles and Trucks director Philippe Brossette.

The conclusions of this test show that the occupants of the Megane, projected at 65kph against a Premium equipped with the Front Under-run Prevention System, have a survival probability in the order of 100 per cent.

However, safety does not come without a price tag. At present the under-run prevention system is offered as an option costing up to £300, but Renault says such devices, like seatbelts, should be enforced by legislation with the cost borne by all manufacturers equally, rather than asking consumers to pay for greater safety.

The catchword for Renault is "co-habitation", the ability

of cars, vans and heavy trucks to be designed so that, when inevitably they do crash, injuries are kept to a minimum. Engineering director Philippe Ventre says: "We believe these safety improvements should be imposed by legislation, but that takes time, like the airbag, which is favoured but has not been enforced by law."

"Safety is not about marketing scoops. All manufacturers should be committed to the same levels of safety in their vehicles."

For Brossette the ideal would be for manufacturers to get together to share ideas and technology, as Renault's car and truck divisions have done, and to build their vehicles with the effects of car-truck collisions in mind.

Brossette says: "There are a lot of people who see large vehicles as 'killer trucks'. They think they should be taken off the road, and see only that trucks have a bad image. The idea is to show that we can build a truck that is safer."

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As the Megane bounced clear, computer analysis shows that its occupants would have escaped relatively unhurt

Millions of motorists could learn to reduce the risk of being involved in a fatal accident. A four-year study into anti-locking brake systems and driver training suggests that ABS could live up to advertising hype by halving road fatalities - but first we need more driving lessons.

At the Aariste Laboratory in France, study leader Alain Priez and his five-strong team watched 67 subjects drive Renault 25 cars around a private road test circuit, claiming to examine driving skills. However each trial came to an unexpected end when a dummy car was pushed out 50 yards in front of the test vehicle as if it was travelling at an average of 64mph. The Highway Code stopping distance at this speed is 87 yards.

"While it would have been possible to avoid impact by braking and turning simultaneously, we were presenting a forced collision for most drivers," said Priez.

The team analysed the severity of collisions by examining impact speed and collision point on the stationary vehicle. "If a car impacts faster than 40mph on to the side of another car's passenger compartment, anyone seated at

Elinor Hardman on an ABS survey

A locking system we have to learn

that point in the compartment will die," said Priez.

The drivers were split into four groups balanced for age, sex and driving experience. The groups used different braking systems and received different training.

Priez judged that 87 per cent of experimental crashes by drivers with standard brakes would have been fatal to passengers in the dummy car. ABS saved many of these "deaths", with fatality figures of 67 per cent for drivers unaware they were using ABS and 62 per cent for those knowingly using the system. Only 36 per cent of collisions by drivers who had been given a morning's tuition on using ABS were categorised as fatal.

None of the drivers using standard brakes was able completely to avoid the collision, but 11 per cent of those equipped with ABS walked away without a bump. Priez

sees the 30 per cent projected fatality difference between drivers trained and untrained in ABS as evidence for the importance of instruction.

During the morning's ABS training session, not one of the drivers braked effectively to start with. All needed practice and guidance.

"Drivers are reluctant to push their feet fully down on the brake and keep them there, especially if they know they have to turn. They are often scared of losing control and release the pedal too quickly. Unless ABS is applied forcefully and constantly it will not work to its full effect."

The study comes amid claims that ABS brakes and other car safety devices cause more accidents than they save, by giving drivers false assurance as to their abilities to survive dangerous situations.

Data from the US Transport Department suggests that while ABS may have reduced pedestrian deaths by over one quarter, fatal car accidents have increased as drivers are losing control in emergencies and fail to stay on the road.

This may be partially explained by a study in Munich several years ago. A taxi fleet in which half the cars had newly-fitted ABS brakes and half had standard brakes was put under secret observation for three years. Researchers anticipated a fall in accident rates of ABS fitted cars. To their surprise, accident rates for the two groups were stable and identical. Only driver behaviour changed, with ABS drivers going faster, making sharper turns and having more near misses. Drivers who feel safer go faster and take more risks. They are secure in the false knowledge that they are unlikely to come to harm.

Priez admits: "We can't say ABS is really improving safety. It is reducing pedestrian accidents in towns, but it seems that people are taking too many risks and failing to use the system properly. Instruction is needed to show people they are not invulnerable - or above bad driving."